

Employers' guide for

Quality Internships

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Goal

Purpose

Advise **employers** in **setting up** excellent internship schemes that benefits students, companies and universities

Objective

Driving behavioral change from **employers towards** the practical implementation of **quality internships**.



Internships' Quality



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Internships' Quality Model

•Quality labels

Advanced : All Orange Quality Indicators checked

Excellent : All Orange Quality Indicators + Blue Quality Indicators checked + at least 10 point

Champion : All Quality Indicators checked

•Quality dimensions

- Remuneration
- Offer and contract
- Organizational culture and work environment
- Career development and employment
- Learning content
- Supervision

Internships' Quality Model

 Remuneration	1. Remunerate a) graduates at least 100% of the Intern Subsistence Index (ISI); and b) students at least 60% of the ISI	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Remunerate a) graduates at least 125% of the ISI; and b) students at least 80% of the ISI	<input type="checkbox"/> (0 or 8 pt)
	3. Remunerate a) graduates at least above 125% of the ISI or the minimum wage, according to which is higher; and b) students at least 100% of the ISI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 9 pt)
 Offer & Contract	1. Offer a duly signed contract/written agreement respecting national labour legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	2. Write in the internship offer a clear description of tasks corresponding to what the intern will actually do (tasks can be revised in accordance with the intern)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3. Limit the internship duration to a maximum of 6 months, except for cases in which the university has designed a specific internship programme not exceeding a year	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Internships' Quality Model

<p>Organisational Culture & Work Environment</p>	1. Give interns a proper introduction to their new work place: e.g. introducing interns to their colleagues, explain the organisation's objectives and values, a tour of the facility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	2. Acknowledge and value intern's inputs and achievements (e.g. public acknowledgement, name on publication, bonuses etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3. Provide each intern with an appropriate working station (desk, computer, software, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	4. Make the intern feel full part of the team (include him in team building activities and celebrations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p>Career Development & Employment</p>	1. Maintain a maximum intern-employee ratio of 1:1 (for companies with up to 7 employees), and a maximum intern-employee ratio of 1:3 (for companies with more than 7 employees)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	2. Provide the intern with a reference letter detailing the work undertaken/completed, the skills and experience acquired	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3. Organise one or more meetings between the intern and the management of the organisation to discuss his future career prospects and potential support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	4. Develop the intern's own network by fostering his active participation in meetings, interactions and projects with clients & partners, as well as networking events (e.g. conferences and seminars)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 1 pt)
	5. Offer at least 1 out of 4 interns an employment opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 6 pt)

Internships' Quality Model

 Learning Content	1. State the skills that the intern will be able to acquire before the start of the internship (in the offer, contract or job interview)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	2. Limit the assignment of unskilled tasks to a maximum of 1/4 of working time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3. Make sure the intern has, or is provided with (informal training), the necessary know-how to carry out his tasks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	4. Provide formal training to increase interns' professional skills through workshops/modules (e.g. software, tools, soft skills, sector knowledge)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 1 pt)
	5. Assign challenging tasks with a high degree of responsibility (e.g. in charge of outputs with substantial visibility or impact)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 1 pt)

 Supervision	1. Assign a supervisor to each intern, with a ratio not exceeding 3 interns to 1 supervisor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	2. Organise an introductory meeting with the intern to discuss mutual expectations, as well as learning and professional objectives of the internship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3. Organise regular sessions at least once a week where the supervisor tracks the intern's progression, gives feedback or provides support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	4. Structure the intern's tasks within a work plan & a timeline (which can be revised with the intern)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	5. Appropriately prepare the supervisor to his task as supervisor, so that his feedback and guidance can maximise the intern's learning curve	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0 or 1 pt)



Cost/Benefit of Quality Internships

Costs for companies

Remuneration and taxes

- The most relevant costs of internships for companies relate to remuneration and taxes including insurance
- Students might not be able to provide a receipt or some other documents supporting remuneration which is also a challenge for companies that might have no way to report these costs

Recruitment

- Recruitment costs include the recruitment process itself, support of interns concerning accommodation, bureaucratic processes and all required paper work. Team building and integration of the intern into the work team is also relevant

Supervision

- Supervision costs are mainly linked to the time an employee in the company has to dedicate to guide and support the intern, monitor the tasks and outcomes of the internship, etc

Workplace and Training

- Workplace costs, including office space and equipment, commodities and supplies used by the intern are also stressed as well as training costs. Training costs include exclusively the cost required to train the intern to perform his/her task. The cost for training staff supporting interns belongs in a separate category since it was only mentioned once

Costs for companies

Apart from Remuneration and Taxes, the most relevant costs supported by companies to host internships are:



Benefits for companies

The recruitment of young talents is a key aspect of internships for companies. It is considered as the main source of costs but also as the process that benefits most from internships:



Benefits for students

Students value internships as a way to improve their own employability, to extend their network of professional contacts and to raise awareness on the labor market.



Benefits for universities

For educational institutions, academic internships are seen as a natural bridge to employers and research opportunities.



Benefits for society/economy

The benefits of academic internships for the society/economy at large directly linked to the benefits for both students and companies:

Student_opportunity
Transition_education_labor
Recruitment_base
Employment
Student_development
Cooperation



Quality Internships Scheme



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Blocking factors

Several issues might become significant barriers to quality internships. We have grouped them below:

- **Training:** lack of training time and personalized guidance; ineffective training
- **Competences:** the intern lacks technical skills related to the operation of the tools, equipment, techniques in use at the host company; the intern lacks soft skills
- **Mentoring:** mentors who are unwilling to support students and invest time in them; lack of supervising/training skills (company), lack of a global introduction; students do not have a full idea of their internship (enterprise, tutors/mentors, content, working time, etc.) before their start
- **Time and duration:** students involved in their studies might not have enough time to focus on the internship; practical phases in the curriculum are often too short to gain enough experience; the length of the internship foreseen by the university does not cover the whole training program designed by the enterprise

Blocking factors

Several issues might become significant barriers to quality internships. We have grouped them below:

- **Recognition, certification:** lack of academic recognition (university); lack of traineeship certificate (company); lack of contract/agreement including work schedule and learning outcomes (company)
- **Resources, costs:** lack of human resources for preparation and supervision (university); lack of appropriate equipment and support (company)
- **Internships attractiveness:** the proposed training and job are not attractive for students; students feel that they are low-cost workers; difficulties to find enough internship placements
- **University related:** internships are not foreseen in the curriculum (university)

Guidelines for a QI scheme

Maintaining an institutional scheme assuring quality internships is a continuous process that demands for dedicated staff. The benefits might be highly relevant. A few guidelines for COMPANIES are presented:

1. Have a clear idea of an ideal intern profile
2. Clarify expectations from the beginning
3. Find a good balance between tasks and learning experience
4. Set goals and write an internship programme beforehand
5. Create a clear, straight to the point, description of the intern's tasks
6. Provide the intern with a holistic view of the organisation. Take time to introduce the intern to the business, the company, the premises, the team, the tools and work methods

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7. Give to interns an overview of the reality of the work beyond the tasks of the internship itself
8. Give the intern the chance to participate in different events
9. Offer training opportunities at or outside the job
10. Ensure team activities (e.g. lunch break, after work drink or sports at the weekend)
11. Treat the intern as an equal member of the team
12. Give the intern meaningful demanding tasks to show responsibility and/or creativity and train problem-solving skills

Guidelines for a QI scheme

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13. Provide appropriate supervision by assigning one fix contact person for the trainee for mentoring
14. The company should assure a regular evaluation of the intern's performance to track his/her progress during the internship and to provide a final assert on the intern's skills and competences
15. Implement certification mechanisms (e.g. open badges) to recognize the learning experience
16. Hand out a certificate (reference letter) at the end including an evaluation and providing meaningful feedback from a professional point of view
17. Provide ample space for feedback on both sides
18. Provide proper equipment (workspace) e.g. instruments, laptop, books

Guidelines for a QI scheme

Maintaining an institutional scheme assuring quality internships is a continuous process that demands for dedicated staff. The benefits might be highly relevant. A few guidelines for UNIVERSITIES are presented:

1. Carefully prepare a Learning Agreement for the internship
2. The learning outcomes should be defined at the start of the internship and a regular follow up has to be ensured throughout the duration of the internship
3. Make logistics clear to the intern. Several aspects are critical such as insurance and visa to come to another country during the internship
4. Universities should ensure that financial means and human resources are available.
5. Internships of 3 months or more need to be embedded in the curriculum of each subject.
6. Supervising staff for practical phases should exist in each faculty. This dedicated staff should be responsible for both preparation, supervision and academic recognition
7. Support the intern with preparation (e.g. finding accommodation, information material about the city and the public transport)



Conclusions

In general

- Running internships has its own pros and cons and requires commitment and professional involvement from both the host company and the student. The return might be of high value for all stake holders: host companies, students, universities and society at large. Finding the proper balance concerning the expectations of all those involved is key for a successful internship programme.
- Understanding and complying to the legal regulations, the clear definition of the role of all different parties involved in the internship and a carefully designed internship plan are all important aspects to consider.

Students' perspective

- Students value internships as a way to boost up their employability and to network in the labour market. They expect an internship to give them an insight into the daily working life as they acquire work experience while studying. Students also hope to improve their soft skills and to acquire practical knowledge on topics related to their study field.
- The student has to be aware of the relevance of an internship for his/her future professional career and employability. If taken seriously, an internship is very frequently an opportunity for the first job experience.

Companies' perspective

- Companies see academic internships as a more efficient recruitment process, since interns are tested and trained in the work place as their performance is evaluated. Internships are also perceived as a way to attract young talents to the company, incorporate fresh ideas and introduce new work methods and technologies at low cost. Companies are concerned in assuring good quality internships so students can promote their good reputation among their universities. This link with universities enables access to well-educated applicants aiming for a professional career after they finish their degree.
- Employers play a central role when it comes to the quality of internships. There are simple steps, easy to implement, that one could take to ensure that the internship offered will meet quality standards and provide an enriching experience for interns and the company itself.

Universities' perspective

- Educational institutions see academic internships as a link to companies. This link is seen as an entry point into the labour market for their students and as a straight connection to promote a deeper cooperation for curriculum development and research purposes.

Society, Economy

- The main benefits of academic internships for the society/economy concerns both students' and companies' needs. On the companies' side, internships provide a sound recruitment base that is effective to find young talents. On the students' side, internships are seen as beneficial to promote students' development and better employment opportunities.



Contributors



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