

Internship Site Supervisor Handbook

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Introduction

A successful internship provides students with an opportunity to apply their classroom learning to the workplace. Internships also provide host organizations with high-achieving workers who bring a fresh perspective and ideas. In order for an internship to be successful, both the site supervisor and the intern must understand how an internship differs from a job, and both must commit to working together to make the most of the opportunity.

Benefits of Internships to:	
<i>Employers</i>	<i>Students</i>
Gain enthusiastic and motivated workers Assistance with special projects A fresh perspective in ongoing projects Develop supervisory skills of staff Access to students with special skills and knowledge Opportunity to train new professionals in your field Develop your own pool of potential employees	An opportunity to "test-drive" a career choice Develop specific skills and knowledge related to a career Develop professional contacts Learn directly from experienced professionals Gain experience in a real-world situation, including interviewing, working with others, communication skills, and culture of various work environments

What kind of students go to Southern New Hampshire University?

SNHU currently enrolls approximately 1900 undergraduate students, 1700 graduate students and 1500 continuing education students from 40 states and 63 countries. SNHU is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), The Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), plus numerous other certifying and accrediting agencies.

The University consists of five schools – the School of Business, the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Education, the School of Community Economic Development and the School of Professional and Continuing Education. We offer 40 bachelor degree programs 25 master degree program and two doctoral programs. Students also have the opportunity to complete a double major. While students choose to major in everything from accounting to psychology to sport management, all complete the general education requirements that help students develop their writing, communication, and analytical skills.

By the time they graduate, approximately 40% of SNHU students will have completed some form of professional preparation experience, including internships, student teaching, and service-learning. Graduates of SNHU are successful leaders in business, social services, education and virtually any field one can imagine. Internships are one important way that students begin the path to success while making a meaningful contribution to your organization.

What's the difference between an internship and a job?

The National Society for Experiential Education defines an internship as "a carefully monitored work or volunteer experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience." The key phrases in this definition are "carefully monitored," "intentional learning goals," and "reflects actively."

In a typical entry-level job, an employee receives training to perform the tasks necessary for the position, and then the employee is expected to carry out the duties as assigned, preferably with little supervision. In an internship, however, the emphasis is on the learning experience. "Intentional learning goals" are developed by the student that supports her/his academic and career interests, and these are made explicit in the form of a Learning Contract. In most cases, as a site supervisor you will be asked to assist the intern and faculty advisor in developing these goals. This ensures that the goals are realistic and also indicates your commitment to helping the intern achieve these goals during the internship. Interns are asked to reflect actively on their experience. This means that interns will often have more questions than a typical employee before, during, and after the internship. This reflection helps make the internship more meaningful, while connecting the on-site experience to the student's academic training. This emphasis on learning does not alter an expectation that the student brings something of value to the employer. The intern is expected to deliver, and should be held accountable for work product that is valuable to the employer.

Before the Internship

If you are considering sponsoring an internship, please consider the following series of questions.

(1) Can I provide a meaningful experience that helps students explore career choices?

Of course, routine work is a part of everyone's job, and internships are no exception. Ask yourself whether you have distinct goals, objectives, or projects for an intern. Will they be part of a team that is developing a new marketing campaign? Will they be conducting research on a product to determine quality control? Will they be allowed to participate in staff meetings?

The increased popularity of internships and a competitive job market has caused some employers to "stretch" the definition of a true internship. In an effort to attract potential employees, some have fallen into the trap of labeling entry-level jobs as internships. For example, an employer may need someone to complete routine office tasks, but by calling it an internship, they hope to attract bright young students who may later be interested in joining the company or organization in a different capacity. This approach usually backfires, however, because students who expect to be challenged and learn new tasks in an internship become unhappy when they discover that the position is not as advertised. This makes it even less likely that they will consider a full-time position later. Even worse, the student usually shares their negative experience with others, resulting in a bad reputation for the employer.

(2) How will the intern be compensated?

Compensation comes in many forms. In some cases, interns are paid at or near the prevailing wage for an entry-level professional. Compensation at this rate helps attract students and ensures that the internship site can pick the "cream of the crop." It also helps students to focus on the internship because they do not have to work a second job at the same time. In other cases, interns are paid a "training wage" that is at or above minimum wage. Some employers offer a stipend, a set amount of money that is awarded without regard to the number of hours completed in an internship. Before offering a stipend, however, employers should check with state regulations concerning stipends to ensure that all appropriate regulations are being followed. Some employers offer no compensation.

(3) Who will supervise the intern?

An intern must have a designated site-supervisor who is responsible for providing orientation, supervision, and opportunities for feedback/reflection for the student. This should be someone who will be available to the student on a regular basis, and possesses expertise in the area in which the intern will work. Even if the intern will rotate through various departments in order to gain broad-based experience, there should be a single overall supervisor who oversees the internship as a whole.

When choosing a site supervisor, it is important to choose someone who:

- Is interested in working with college students
- Has the time to invest in the internship, especially during the first few weeks
- Has qualities such as leadership, strong communication, and patience

Since an internship is defined as a learning experience, proper supervision of the intern is essential. The supervisor serves as a teacher, mentor, critic, and boss. Ongoing supervision of the student intern is key to the success of the internship. This is especially true for students who do not have extensive work experience. The work environment is unlike the classroom in many ways. For example, in an academic environment students are accustomed to having clear objectives and receiving frequent feedback regarding their progress (e.g., grades). Also, students are expected to challenge their "supervisors" (professors) and focus on new ways of thinking rather than following established protocols. Student behaviors that are often rewarded in the classroom can sometimes cause difficulties in the workplace. Acknowledging and identifying the different expectations between the workplace and school can help interns make a successful transition to the world of work.

An effective method of intern supervision is to have a set time-- weekly is recommended -- to meet with the intern to review progress on projects, touch base, and provide feedback. Some supervisors do this over lunch; others choose a more formal setting, depending on the culture of your organization and time constraints.

Orientation

Establish written goals and objectives and clarify these goals and objectives before the intern begins working. Some interns need more guidance than others, and many factors must be taken into consideration. Consider the intern's cultural background, disabilities, learning style, and previous experience. Evaluate his or her level of maturity and confidence.

Orientation can be a formal or informal process depending on the number of interns and needs of the employer. However, regardless of the structure, there are important elements that should be included in any orientation program for interns. Plan to include the following in your initial training:

Information about the organization › Offer interns your company or organization's literature to review and any other documents that are important for them to understand the big picture. If available, include an organizational chart that explains various roles and responsibilities of employees.

Structure › Interns might not be familiar with formal workplace procedures (e.g., attendance policies, break times, days off). Generate a written document that clarifies relevant policies and procedures and submit this to interns on their first day with your organization.

Introductions › Take time in the beginning of the internship to introduce the intern to key people in the organization. Allow more time for conversation with those employees who are likely to interact with the intern on a regular basis. Some interns, based on personality or culture, may be reluctant to seek out co-workers on their own. By making a special effort to encourage those contacts early on, interns will feel more comfortable asking for advice or support later.

Training

Training is as important as supervision. Establish a training program that will give the intern a clear understanding of what is expected, and include information about the duties that will be supervised and evaluated. Refer to the learning contract or agreement that was signed at the beginning of the internship. Interns, as students, appreciate any opportunity to learn new skills or increase their

knowledge. Developing a plan for training throughout the internship will keep students interested in the position and ready to tackle new challenges. Ongoing training may include the following:

Skill Development › There may be a need for training in specific skills such as computer programs, office equipment, or other tasks directly related to the job. Even very bright students with great potential will struggle if they are not instructed in the specifics related to successful completion of duties.

Shadowing › Allow interns to participate in activities and meetings. Interns may have leadership potential but not understand the culture of your organization. They will rely on their supervisor to educate them.

Questions › Interns might not know when to speak or how or what to ask. Assist them in actively learning by explaining and clarifying everything. Suggest and encourage questions at appropriate times.

Professional conferences or association meetings › If possible, see if you can offer the opportunity to attend a training or networking event. It helps interns to get a feel for the overall mission of your organization, and at the same time makes them feel that they are valued.

Mentoring

A mentor is a counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. Valuable internship experiences not only include effective supervision, but also a large component of mentoring. Most interns seek out internships in order to develop their own career goals. Mentors help guide students through their experience. This may mean allowing or encouraging the student to participate in events that may not normally be open to entry-level professionals, such as certain staff meetings, client consultations, or other work-related events. Even though these events may not be directly tied to the intern's specific job duties, they will help provide a broad overview of your business or organization. A mentoring relationship is valuable for both the intern and the professional. The intern has the opportunity to reflect on his or her experience in a supportive, educational atmosphere. The mentor can pass on a wealth of experience and knowledge, and benefits from a fresh perspective and new ways of thinking.

Evaluation

Evaluation is important to an intern's development and is an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is helpful if supervisors evaluate throughout the entire internship, not just at the two week mark, mid-term and end. The evaluation should be structured as a learning experience and an opportunity for bilateral feedback. Regularly scheduled evaluations help avoid common problems with internships, including miscommunication, misunderstanding of job roles, and lack of specific goals and objectives. The initial 2-week evaluation is especially important and will help you understand whether the intern's orientation and training were sufficient, or if there are specific areas in which the intern has questions or needs further training. It can help you to catch issues before they become problems.

Criteria to consider when evaluating an intern are:

- Progress towards or accomplishment of learning objectives as stated in the learning contract
- Skill development or job knowledge gained over the course of the internship
- Overall contribution to the mission of the organization
- Dependability, punctuality, attendance
- Relations with others, overall attitude
- Potential in the field

The student will also evaluate the internship experience, which is important in determining the

value of the work experience for future interns. Categories might include:

- Was there educational value or merit in the assignment?
- Did the position live up to its initial description?
- Was the supervisor receptive to your ideas?
- Does the experience relate to your major or career goals?
- Did you receive a proper job orientation?
- Was the supervisor willing and/or capable of answering questions?
- Did you develop work habits?

Ending the Internship

An internship should have a clearly stated end date that is identified before the internship begins. Completing a formal evaluation process such as the one described above can help both the site supervisor and the intern to put closure on the experience. You also may want to have some form of acknowledgment such as a lunch with co-workers in the final week of the internship. Since co-workers often have extensive contact with interns, this type of event can be a positive way to recognize the contribution of other employees as well as the intern.

At the end of the internship, if you are considering hiring the intern for a full-time or part-time position, it is important to make this transition. It is not fair to the intern or co-workers to simply "extend the internship." Make the offer as you would to any employee, including a new title and job description. As the person is now considered an employee with some degree of experience and more responsibility, it is normal practice to offer a pay raise when someone makes the step from intern to employee.

Checklist for Internship Site Supervisors

- _____ Develop internship position description
- _____ Post advertisement with the SNHU Career Development Center (CDC)
- _____ Interview candidates/hire intern
- _____ Meet with intern (and possibly faculty/CDC staff advisor) to establish Learning Contract
- _____ Provide/supervise training of intern
- _____ Establish and conduct regularly scheduled supervision meetings
- _____ Provide a two-week, mid-term and end-of-internship evaluation, including completing evaluation forms

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Assistance from the SNHU Career Development Center

The Career Development Center is available to help internship site supervisors before, during, and after internships. Before an internship, CDC staff can help employers determine whether the internship is likely to be a good fit for SNHU students (e.g., whether students are likely to have the training and interest necessary to be successful in your organization). We can also publicize the internship in many ways, including use of the internet, e-mail to targeted majors, posters, and other advertising. Employers can take advantage of our on-campus recruiting services, including our online employer job/internship posting service, interviewing on campus and the opportunity to provide information sessions to interested students.

When you decide to hire an SNHU student as an intern, CDC staff and faculty advisors are available to help in developing learning objectives and the Learning Contract. In the rare instance that there is a problem during an internship, we can help to mediate any conflict. CDC staff will serve as the school point-of-contact for the internship and the school liaison to the employer. This may include scheduled site

visits or phone calls to check in on the internship and offer any assistance as needed.

We look forward to working with you regarding internships. A successful internship provides positive outcomes for everyone involved. Should you have any questions regarding internships, please do not hesitate to contact the SNHU Career Development Center.