

Student Internships

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The Benefit

There's a balance; do you focus on your studies (and enjoy what free time you have), or do you get some experience and potentially earn some money? There are of course many perks to going for an internship. The experience is great; basically, it makes you more employable. There are many other people with the same degree as you, probably going for the same jobs as you as graduates. You have to stand out, and one great way is by showing employers that you've already got involved in your area of interest.

Of course, for this to be true, the internship would ideally be related to your future career. But even if it isn't, it shows a great sense of time management, a certain level of responsibility, and an eagerness to work. Internships also give you a taste of what to expect from that field of work. What better time to test the waters than when you still have the safety net of university to fall into?

Many students also find themselves without money. Thankfully, not all internships are unpaid, and the experience you're getting also contributes to your income; which is not a bad thing if you're looking at coming out of university with an overdraft. However, you may not be paid, but this doesn't mean that the work isn't worth your time. You will meet many people who will be able to aid you in your development. They may want to keep you on, recommend you to a friend, or simply provide a good reference when you need one.

Taking on an internship also helps to focus your time and improve your work ethic. You actively have to manage your workload, prioritise, and learn how to motivate yourself. This doesn't just look good on a CV, but prepares you well for after graduation.

The Balance

Do you have the time to commit to a job? This is dependent on you and your course. If you have too much work as it is, you may wish to carefully consider the

benefits of an internship. Your degree must come first. You are at university to get a degree, and to sacrifice the quality of that degree would be unwise.

If you just want money, perhaps an internship isn't for you. The employer wants you to grow, they want you to develop and contribute. You need passion, and you need to have a reason to manage your time successfully. Your time matters. Work out a schedule; decide how to break up your time depending on how much work needs to get done and how you are to meet coursework deadlines.

Don't get stressed. If you are overwhelmed, then talk to your employer and to the relevant people at your university (course director, mentor, or careers centre). Don't let your internship work and your degree suffer because you couldn't ask for help.

Getting an Internship

There are many ways to go about applying for internships. Many universities offer programmes and services to get students in touch with companies. There are also numerous websites dedicated to advertising internship jobs.

Begin by searching in a field of work that you potentially want to do. Don't go for an internship in a field that holds no interest for you, or wouldn't challenge you. Read the description for the job closely, this will be the basis of your cover letter. Show your eagerness in the cover letter; internships are about getting experience, so less will depend on your CV and previous work experience and more on what the employer sees in you.

If you get an interview, ask questions about the role. You're young and new to the field; show the employer that you want to learn and you want to improve. Ask about what the internship could lead to; this would not only show your ambition, but actually give you ideas of jobs and work environments that you may not have considered.

What if it Goes Wrong?

You have very little to lose from being an intern. As long as you manage your time and workload, you'll be absolutely fine. You have so much experience to gain; this can be a really useful stepping stone in your life.

However, like all jobs, there is the potential that something could go wrong. You may be taking on too much work, you may despise the role, or you may feel that you can earn more money in another job. Talk to your employer, and be honest. They don't want someone working for them who doesn't want to be working for them. Talk to your university; they will do their best to ensure that your degree does not suffer.

