

Tips for Writing an Effective Internship Position Description

The ideal internship description will structure the experience for the intern and the organization, and can be used to measure goals and accomplishments.

Considerations

In creating an internship position, consider the following:

- The purpose of the internship—Document the particular contributions of the internship to the organization’s overall mission
- The duties and essential activities/functions required
- The name of the department where the internship will be performed
- The expectations regarding outcomes of tasks/projects performed and completed
- The physical and mental requirements of the internship—Also include the required major, minimum GPA (if applicable), class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior or senior) and any technical job specific skills the intern would need to perform the internship successfully
- The length of the internship and the number of hours per week
- The supervisor title responsible for mentoring and evaluating the intern’s progress
- Any training that will be provided

Degree Related Projects

As part of the educational process, internship work activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic major and the degree the interns expect to receive. Students who perform menial tasks will become quickly demoralized and will learn nothing about applying their expertise to a business environment. While many students work (or have worked) at part-time jobs to finance their education, an internship does not fall into the category of a job. It is actually part of their academic program and should offer every opportunity to link classroom learning to workplace experience.

Providing Feedback

Undergraduate students want and appreciate clear direction regarding expectations and frequent feedback concerning what and how they have done. (In their academic environment, clear direction and periodic feedback is common). It is most important that interns perceive their work is making a useful contribution to the sponsoring organization.

Tasks

A particular concern at the undergraduate level is that the work assignments provide the interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the organization. Of course, some of the interns’ responsibilities will involve repetition, because all work involves some repeated activity.

Some sample tasks include:

- Performing laboratory tests
- Writing handbooks or manuals
- Designing and maintaining websites and social media sites
- Creating posters, charts, graphs
- Organizing and promoting company and/or community events
- Generating financial forecast and cost recovery reports
- Performing software/hardware modifications
- Conducting studies and surveys
- Developing slide/sound presentations
- Compiling technical reports
- Creating academic lesson plans
- Conducting research
- Generating marketing plans
- Conducting training packages
- Preparing budgets and financial reports

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Developing challenging work assignments relative to the students' abilities is a major thrust of the position description. Your final internship/field experience description should incorporate the needs of your organization as well as the abilities and academic goals of the students you work with.

Key Points

- Describe challenging, but realistic tasks students can accomplish within the internship time period
- Work with CCESL to establish specific learning objectives for students
- Identify outcomes or expected products
- Be willing to incorporate the students' particular strengths
- Show how this work relates to the overall efforts of the department or organization