

## Internships, Work experience and Industrial Placements

### **1) What is an internship?**

An internship is a job opportunity offered by an employer, usually for fixed length of time and designed to give someone practical experience in that field, and of course, in that particular company. It's good for employers as they can find the best talent in a "try before you buy" way, and it is great experience for an intern (a person doing an internship) as the internship will add another element to their CV, and if they impress they may well be offered a graduate job with that particular company.

### **2) Who is an internship for?**

Internships are generally for undergraduates, and specifically penultimate year students. This is not always the case though, as more and more jobs are now being called "internships". It's always worth checking out internships even if you're not a penultimate year student and finding out what the criteria are.

### **3) Are internships paid?**

Generally yes – legislation for this has changed in the last few years and not everyone is clear on this (including employers!). Employers are legally obligated to pay all interns at least the minimum wage, unless the internship falls under the following categories:

- > If the internship is doing voluntary work for a registered charity
- > If the internship is simply "work-shadowing"
- > If the internship is part of your course of study

If you find an internship, and it looks like they are not paying a wage, then please check out the National Council for Work Experience website which has more information - [click here](#)

### **4) How long does an internship go on for?**

Internships generally can last from a few days up to 12 weeks. As they tend to be for penultimate year undergraduates, they are designed to fit in with holiday periods. Most come in the guise of summer internships, but there are also Easter internships and winter internships potentially. Law internships (known as mini-pupillages) tend to be shorter, from a couple of days to a few weeks on the whole.

There are of course internships that last much longer, even though these tend to be called placements – either year out placements or industrial placements

### **5) What will I have to do in my internship?**

The idea with internships is that it lets the employer train you and find out what kind of a worker and person you are so they can decide whether to give you a job after you graduate. This means that it makes no sense for them to make you make the coffee, clean up etc, as they probably

won't learn all that much about you! What you end up doing will depend on the company, but you should expect to be contributing in the work field you are in. Companies have been known to give interns projects, but you can also expect to get formal training, reviews etc.

## **6) How will it help me with my career?**

An internship can help your CV stand out, it will give you practical work experience in the field you want to go in to, and can therefore help when you're looking for a graduate job. If you impress at the internship the company may offer you a graduate position anyway, so you won't have to search for a job after you graduate. Alternatively, the experience, and the fact that you have been accepted to do an internship, and have completed it, shows prospective employers that you are committed to a career in that area, and that you were deemed employable by whoever gave you the internship!

## **7) How easy is it to get an internship?**

It depends on a lot of things – but primarily on the company you are applying to. Internships with big banks, investment banks, accountancy firms and professional services companies are hard to get as lots of people apply for them. Obviously, the more competition there is for a limited number of internship placements, the harder it will be to get. There is also an enormous diversity between application processes, larger multinational companies will have applications, followed by interviews and assessment days etc, whilst smaller ones will require much less. It's always a good idea though to look for smaller companies as well as at the bigger ones, to maximise your chances of getting offered the internship.

## **8) What companies have internships?**

A huge range of companies offer internships these days. From companies in big sectors - banks, professional services, investment banks, accountancy and big retailers, to a huge number of smaller companies. The range of sectors is massive, and isn't restricted to anything. There are incidentally also a number of charities that offer internships as well.

## **9) Where will I be able to get an internship?**

It depends the company - there are lots of internships in London as this is obviously where a lot of financial and multi nationals have their headquarters or just offices. Some of the main construction companies offer internships throughout the country however, as do many other organisations. It's important to consider where you can work when applying however, as if you're far from the capital, a London internship may be harder to organise the logistics for. Generally speaking though, internships in London or probably more common place than anywhere else.

## **10) What is an industrial placement or a sandwich placement?**

An industrial placement (otherwise known as a sandwich placement) is generally a 12 month work experience placement. It's very similar to an internship but the placement is sometimes organised through your university (or by yourself but with help and monitoring) and is part of the

course. As it's a longer period you'll get to do more in the company, and they'll be able to get to know you better. Obviously you have longer to prove yourself to them, and this can help get you a graduate job with them. Engineering and construction related university courses tend to have a year in industry, for an industrial placement.

### **11) What is the difference between an internship and an industrial placement?**

Generally the timeframe (internships are shorter, whilst an industrial placement is usually 12 months) and the tendency for a placement to be a part of your university course, and the university playing some part in organising / monitoring the placement.

### **12) General work experience - can it be as good as an internship?**

Absolutely! An internship is a fairly structured way of adding to your CV, getting practical work experience, and experiencing the industry that you are interested in. The term "internship" can be applied to a lot of things though, and "work experience" can massively overlap it. Any work experience that is relevant or has helped build up your skill set should be seen positively by future employers, so whether you see a job titled "work experience" or "internship", they may both be as useful for you as each other.