

Employer Guide

How to maximise the contribution
an intern makes

Employers Guide

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Introduction

Many of our student interns may be inexperienced with the world of work and are therefore likely to need regular support and supervision. Good management and supervision will make them more productive and develop more quickly. The aim of the internship is to get the best out of the intern so that they make the best possible contribution to the internship. The following guidelines will help you design a high quality internship:

- Include a defined project/piece of work that your intern can take ownership of. This should be delivered within an agreed timeline, with appropriate supervision.
- Combine specific experience with the opportunity to gain wider awareness of the sector.
- Provide a well-supported and appropriately managed learning opportunity, with an induction programme, relevant training, regular reviews, line management support and appropriate workplace and facilities.

How to use this guide

This guide has been created to support you in welcoming your intern into their role. It will help you identify how to ensure that your intern is able to make the greatest contribution to your organisation by providing you with the information and guidance needed to provide a high quality internship experience. It is designed to support you as you prepare to host your intern, guide you through your responsibilities, clarify what will be expected of you, and provide some insights into students' expectations.

The content is based on our experience of similar schemes and feedback from interns and employers. It incorporates best practice guidance from professional organisations such as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) and ASET, the work based and placement learning organisation.

Contact information

The Warwick Internships Development Team:

Email: placementlearning@warwick.ac.uk Phone: 02476 151882

Online Resources from our Internships, Placements & Work Experience website

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/induction

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/treatment

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/ending

Further information available from [CIPD: Internships that work - a guide for employers -](#)

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/routes-work/internships-guide#>

Getting to know your intern

This section provides some context and background information that you may find useful to support you as you get to know your intern and manage their internship, particularly if this is the first time you have provided an internship opportunity for a Warwick student.

The intern's perspective – what makes a good or bad internship experience?

In planning your internship and how you are going to support your new intern, it might be useful to consider the feedback received from 2016/17's Warwick interns, who highlighted the following characteristics of good or bad internships:

A good internship experience:

- The way someone is managed is extremely important to get the best out of your intern
- Having a good brief
- A good balance of autonomy and direction
- Other employees are approachable and friendly
- Good support network, guidance and organisation
- Where the intern's opinion and offering is truly valued
- Regular catch ups
- Feeling like you're a part of the team
- Being given responsibility
- Clear professional and personal objectives
- Seeing efforts brought to life
- Having constructive feedback

A bad internship experience:

- Not being clear about expectations
- Not having a proper induction
- No training provided
- Disorganised internship
- Mopping up tasks from other team members
- Not having someone who can go to ask questions

Workforce Generations

As the CIPD's "Gen Up" [research](#) highlights, each generation's attitude to work is fostered by the environment in which they grew up. The CIPD's research suggests that there are four generations represented in the workforce:

- Baby boomers – born 1946 – 1960
- Generation X – born between 1961 and 1980; children of the Baby Boomers. Generally not as career minded, the generation that began the technological revolution
- Generation Y – born between 1981 and 1995. Grown up during the credit boom. Also known also as 'Millennials' who have benefitted from the technological revolution
- Generation Z – born after 1996. Grown up during the recession, they are aware that failure can have harsh consequences and concerned about financial stability. Also known as 'Digital

Natives’ who have a lifelong use of communications and media technologies e.g. internet, instant and text messaging, MP3s, mobile phones, Facebook and Twitter.

Each generation brings divergent skills, learning styles, and expectations around reward. There are therefore practical implications for attracting, retaining and managing each generation. Given that the majority of the existing staff in your organisation are statistically likely to be either Generation X or Y, you may find it useful to take account of the implications of this research for both managing the Generation Z interns and considering the working relationships with the teams of existing staff they will join.

Characteristics of Generation Y and Z

Your intern is likely to be a member of Generation Y or Z. Their attitude to work will be vastly different from those of previous generations, and it may be helpful to consider some of the likely characteristics of Generation Y & Z which you may find in your interns:

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| Thrive on knowing where they fit within the bigger picture | Prefer well-defined chains of command and teaching-style leadership (especially earlier on in the internship). Be clear in your instructions and expectations and they’ll gain the confidence to innovate, make suggestions or anticipate what’s needed. |
| Seek friendly & flexible work environment | May prefer to work at their desks for certain tasks and from a collaborative open space (where available) for another. May prefer to read e-mail and update presentations on iPads, which could appear overly informal in some settings. Share your expectations around working culture, or adapt to their way of working if you have the flexibility. |
| Thrive on private time | This will allow them to exercise their innovative ability. They will be able to use this independent time to think, tinker and explore new ideas. Again, share your expectations and reach a compromise if you feel that this presents a challenge in your working culture. |
| Motivated by recognition (feedback) & rewards (meaningful work) | Want to be listened to and valued for their opinions, may also be more focussed on tangible outcomes than their own personal development. If you expect them to work towards less tangible outcomes, be clear about how these add value to your organisation, particularly if you need them to develop skills or confidence before engaging with more tangible tasks. |
| Desire to learn new job skills | Strong desire to grow and keen to progress. Offer feedback on apparent progress, and where more progress could be made. |
| Blurring lines between work and personal life | Beyond the workplace, they will continue to blur the lines between personal and work lives as they expect to have fun at work and stay connected digitally 24/7. Gen Z are more likely to bring their “authentic selves” to work every day and expect colleagues to respond to them, personally and professionally, in the same way. |

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| Realistic about job longevity | More open to 'job hopping' than previous generations. Research indicates that 83% of today's students believe that three years or less is the appropriate amount of time to spend at their first job, and 27% believe you should stay at your first job for a year or less. |
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Positives

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| Goal-oriented | Generation Z is driven and focused on getting their dream job. They have a can-do attitude and relish rising to the challenge. |
| Keen to progress | Focused on the opportunity for growth rather than salary. They rate opportunity for career growth as the most important aspect of their first job (36%) followed by fulfilling work (19%) and stability (19%). |
| Entrepreneurial & enthusiastic | Their approach is likely to be: "I think globally, I will be resourceful, I will succeed" |
| Innovative | Open to new ideas and ways of working. Asks "Why do we do this?" "Why can't we do it differently?" "Why don't we do it this way?" They're grateful for the opportunity. The world's their oyster. |
| Tech-savvy | At least 15 years on from the first e-mail systems, these generations prefer greater, more immediate interaction through email and social media. They have strong technological understanding and an ability to adapt what they know to different platforms. |
| Collaborative | Team players who use a range of digital tools to facilitate team work. |

Negatives

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| Lack 'working life' skills & commercial awareness | Not many of these interns have had the opportunities to 'learn by doing'. These interns need to realise that by being more commercially aware they will be able to add more value to an organisation. |
| Lack self-awareness & confidence | Lack of confidence is often a key challenge for Gen Z to overcome, and can often be influenced by life circumstances. While confidence may be difficult to actively build, work experience has a significant role to play. |
| Need for immediacy | The immediacy of information that Generations Y and Z are used to has had two main effects: more 'clutter' – i.e. more information available than ever before, and more distilled – i.e. 'bite-size' and refined. Their interaction with technology has enhanced their ability to sift through communication for the essentials. Consequently, they have greater impatience for the right information. Communication needs to be clear and to-the-point, as well as honest and up-front. |
| Ask, need & want constant feedback | They are used to instantaneous technology, want instant answers and seek immediate gratification. Feedback therefore needs to be clear, to the point, honest and up-front. |

As an employer you will be able to help the intern become more work-ready for a future job role, whether within your own organisation, or elsewhere. Helping them to build self-awareness is also a helpful base for developing confidence. Only by knowing their strengths and weaknesses, and learning how to address them, will the interns learn to be more aware and able to increase their own confidence.

Top tips for managing an intern

According to the Association of Graduate Recruiters (now Institute of Student Employers) the quality of the experience is heavily influenced by managers to whom they (interns) are reporting to. To quote a previous Warwick Intern 2016:

“The way someone is managed is extremely important. Provide your intern with the support and guidance that they need and steer them in the right direction from the off, but do not be overbearing - trust in your intern to deliver high quality work to tight deadlines and be assured that if you have given them a good brief and made yourself approachable then they will come to you for help and advice. Being a good manager is so important if you want to get the best out of your intern/ employee”. Warwick Intern, 2016.

The following observations may be helpful in managing your intern:

Previous work experience

They may have limited work experience and be out of their comfort zone in an office environment, and not really understand office/work expectations, which initially may make them seem lacking in confidence. As a consequence they may initially perform task more slowly.

It may be the first time they have sent a business email or used a piece of office equipment; they may be nervous about using and making business phone calls. They may be more used to laptops and iPads rather than desktops and networks, so check their confidence levels with your hardware before losing time to them trying to work everything out surreptitiously.

Be clear about your expectations around communication, e.g. with emails – salutations, signature, your idea of how a business-style email should look and read.

Manage expectations and agree what is required

Your intern is likely to be enthusiastic, wanting to demonstrate their abilities by taking on a piece of meaningful work. Whilst this is great, it is important to manage expectations and agree in advance what is required for the project. You can do this by sharing the bigger picture and the outcome you are aiming for so they understand how the tasks/project relate to this.

Provide ongoing feedback

Previous interns have indicated that they value receiving clear, concise face to face feedback. They value re-assurance and will want to understand if they are achieving what is expected of them.

Provide learning and development opportunities

As well as undertaking tasks/project work, interns should be encouraged to reflect on their learning and development experiences, particularly in relation to how they are acquiring or extending their own skills. They will be keen to develop their commercial awareness, and having the opportunity to attend team meetings, conferences, and meetings with external partners, suppliers or customers will contribute enormously to this.

Recognise value of being part of the team

Your intern will want to be part of a team. They are used to socializing and speaking to others, keen to fit in, work with others to solve problems and use team mates for ideas and information. As team members they will bring their own unique insights and ideas.

Consider management style and approach

During the internship, depending on the task and how they demonstrate their ability and as they gain experience, you will be using various approaches across the telling/delegating continuum:

1. TELL - Initially you may be required to provide more support and guidance. They are more likely to need regular support and supervision
2. SELL – You may have to sell your approach; ‘It’s like this because ... And you can be part of it by ...’
3. COACH – As they gain experience you can consider a coaching style and work with them to achieve a goal or find a solution to a problem.
4. CONSULT – Warwick interns are bright individuals who ask questions, look at things critically, and have an opinion. Encouraging this behaviour will support their contribution to the internship. Asking ‘what are your thoughts?’ ‘How could this be achieved?’ will be useful. Equally testing out ideas may provide a different view point for the project
5. DELEGATE - once they have experience you can feel more confident in delegating tasks

During the period of the internship this could move from telling to delegating. This will enable them to feel like they have taken the responsibility and enable the project to progress.

In summary, your intern will appreciate a management style which provides them with a steer but also provides them with an opportunity to shine.

Preparing for the internship

Taking time to prepare for the internship will be beneficial for you and the intern. Here are some ideas worth considering - it is not an exhaustive list but will get you started:

Prepare for your intern's arrival:

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| Share joining information | Clarify where the interns should report on their first day, dress code, what they will be doing on their first day, identify anything they can/should read in advance. |
| Meet/speak with your intern | Have a conversation to understand their expectations, your expectations and what you are both looking to achieve. Make reference to any specific project or day to day tasks they will undertake, understand any concerns. |
| Prepare a work plan | A work plan details the day to day activities as well as broader project related activities that the intern will be undertaking. It should reflect the realities of working life and include training to support them in their role. Having a work plan will help the intern develop their time management skills and is a key way to ensure the internship produces the best outcomes for you and the intern. |
| Prepare their induction programme | See below – 'Starting the internship' |
| Schedule time in for regular reviews | Schedule regular review meetings, especially in the first few weeks. Schedule a Mid-Internship Review meeting and some preparation time. |
| Brief colleagues | Identify who will be working with the intern and consider how the intern can be best integrated into the existing team/s. |
| Make practical arrangements | Ensure that practical matters such as a workstation, ID card, telephone, safety equipment and parking are in place. Check insurance cover, enrolment of intern on payroll, and any adjustments for disability (if necessary). |
| Assign a work 'buddy' | As well as a line manager or supervisor, all interns should be assigned a buddy or mentor to assist with integration into the organisation. This might be helpful with developing professional networks, providing support around career choices, sharing their own personal journey or just answering any questions that the intern is embarrassed to ask their line manager. |
| Resolve any outstanding queries | For any queries from an HR/employment perspective: www.gov.uk . |

Starting the internship

Induction

Your intern should have a full induction to the organisation in the same way that any other employee would. A good induction provides a firm foundation for the rest of the internship and the intern will appreciate this:

“I think it is also about recognising that an intern will be new to the business and the working world, so actually being ready to provide support where needed can really ensure an internship is a positive and mutually productive experience”. Warwick Intern, 2016.

The induction programme should include:

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| Information on the organisation | The organisation structure, roles and responsibilities, values, business objectives, history. |
| Introduction to key contacts | This should include senior staff, relevant colleagues and teams as well as support staff. This could include a previous or newer member of staff who has recently transitioned to the team or organisation. |
| Tour of your facilities | Including break-out areas, where to get food, location of toilets, fire exits and muster point. |
| Expectations | Clarify working hours, time keeping, taking and receiving telephone calls, absence procedures, use of internet and email etiquette, smoking and eating, dealing with difficulties. |
| Security | Taking care of ID card, not sharing log-in details for computer, keeping work account separate from their personal account, confidentiality agreement if applicable, and any GDPR related issues. |
| Behaviours | Identify the key business behaviours that are expected, such as being professional, respectful, listening, asking for help, working with others. |
| Duties | This will include both specific project briefs and the day-to-day activities. Procedures for basic communication and administration should also be covered, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone etiquette – how to answer phone calls and transfer calls • Setting up meetings, e.g. via Outlook • Preferred email format/principles • Expenses – criteria and procedures for claiming expenses • GDPR - compliance actions and information |
| Meeting with work ‘buddy’ | Clarify the role of the buddy, how they can contact them. Schedule an introductory and regular meetings. |
| Hear from a previous or newer member of staff | Meeting with a recently appointed member of staff will provide useful insights into what is expected and about how best to transition into the team and organisation. |

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| Salary and payroll | Ensure that intern has supplied necessary payroll information and knows how and when they will be paid, and how to access a copy of their payslip. For some interns, this might be their first experience of tax and other deductions. |
| Health & Safety | <p>A full health and safety induction is a legal requirement. This should include risk assessments explaining risks and how they are controlled and advising them on how to raise Health & Safety concerns.</p> <p>A new risk assessment should be carried out if there is not already one in place which covers the activities to be undertaken by the intern. You may also take the opportunity of hosting an intern to review your existing risk assessments, particularly if they present any new factors to consider, or if you are making reasonable adjustments.</p> |

Setting objectives

It is important that there is a constructive discussion about both the employer’s and the intern’s objectives for the internship so that both of you are clear about what is to be achieved.

Your intern will have access to Warwick’s Work Experience Online Learning & Development (L&D) Moodle, which will help them to maximise their internship experience while facilitating the achievement of your organisation’s internship objectives. The L&D module should ideally have equipped your intern in the following preparation. However, if they have not done so, please encourage them to engage on the [Work Experience L&D](#).

- Undertaken research about your organisation and the environment in which it operates
- Completed the Warwick Employability Development Skills profile to have a better understanding of his/her skill strengths and areas for development.
- Practised using the CARE (Context, Action, Result and Evaluation) model to demonstrate his/her skills and learn how to articulate them in a meaningful way.
- Identified the key personal objectives and the key skills they wish to achieve during their internship.

You can make reference to this preparation as part of your discussion as this will provide the framework for the intern’s personal development and learning.

As with all new employees, the intern may be overwhelmed with the amount of information they are having to absorb, so it is worth staggering the induction process over a few days and reviewing their progress at regular intervals.

For more information: warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/induction

During the internship

The main principle for supporting the intern is to treat him/her as an employee as far as possible, recognizing that additional guidance may be needed. To support the project/piece of work and enable the intern to get the most from the experience you might want to consider the following:

Share workplace practices

Building on the induction discussion, it is important to share how things happen in the organisation – you may find that there are particular aspects of workplace practices that need to be revisited as the intern settles into their role. The following examples will give you some ideas of things that may need to be clarified to enhance your intern's integration and allay any anxieties:

- The organisation's systems and processes
- Key contacts for particular activities, such as 'who to contact if...'
- The protocols for the use of shared documents and folders on the computer network

Ongoing feedback

Feedback from previous interns has indicated that interns attach greater value and attention to the completion of projects/tasks and less importance to the value of their personal and skills development. However, being able to articulate what they have learned and the skills that they have accomplished is an important element of their career development going forward as they apply for graduate roles.

Personal reflection

As an employer, your contribution to their personal and skills development is significant, and you can support this personal development by encouraging your intern to be reflective about what they are learning. All interns have access to the Warwick's [Work Experience L&D](#) Moodle course to think through and record what they are learning – about themselves, their working environment and the organisation. You can encourage them to think that having an area for development is not a failure, but crucial for learning to take place.

By undertaking regular reviews of progress and output against day to day duties and the project, you can encourage this personal reflection by asking what is going well, and exploring how they can be further challenged. Encouraging interns to ask questions, share information and insights with you will also support the intern's personal development.

Developing commercial awareness

An internship provides the perfect opportunity for interns to gain relevant commercial awareness, and having this awareness will result in him/her being much better placed to secure employment. Having the opportunity to attend events, internal and external meetings, meet with other professionals and become part of a wider network will make a huge contribution to the intern's commercial awareness.

Networking

Research shows that an estimated 80% of job opportunities are never advertised but are offered to individuals already known to the employer. Interns are therefore encouraged to make best use of the internship opportunity by seeking to establish and develop their professional connections. This could include creating their own LinkedIn profile, connecting with relevant professional networks and finding out the effective networking strategies used by their work colleagues.

Being included in social activities is also an important part of an intern's experience as it provides an opportunity to connect with others in a social setting, and it also provides a realistic experience of working life. This could be anything from a team night out to a conversation about Netflix by the kettle – whatever's normal for your organisation.

For more information about managing your intern, visit:

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/treatment

Review and Reflect

1 to 1 Mid-Internship Review meeting

You could meet with your intern around the (mid-internship) to review the internship. The purpose of this meeting is to take time to reflect with your intern on their learning experiences and personal and skills development. It will also provide you with valuable feedback on the contribution that the intern has made to your organisation.

Through their participation with Warwick's Work Experience L&D Moodle course, your intern ideally should have undertaken an evaluation of their progress to date, including their personal development and internship objectives set with you, during the early weeks of their internship.

The discussion that you have, will provide a perfect opportunity for your intern to start to articulate their experience in a way that will support their future career development and equip them for future job applications and interviews.

Your intern may approach you for some constructive feedback on their performance. We encourage interns to update their CV to include the internship experience and to share this with you. Your feedback will be very much appreciated, particularly your insight into the skills and attributes valued in your particular business or commercial sector.

Completing the internship

At this point, it is recommended that you conduct an exit evaluation discussion with your intern. The close of the internship offers a good opportunity to consolidate the best of the experience in the intern's mind and to gain feedback for improving your organisation's internship scheme.

To your intern, the final review will involve an opportunity for discussion about their performance in a workplace setting, their effectiveness in bringing their knowledge and skills to bear on real-world problems and tasks, and the learning from the overall experience of the internship.

The evaluation session should be objective with input and feedback from both the intern and the line manager. It is important that examples are provided to support your intern's development.

For more information and guidance about how to mark the end of the internship, please visit:

warwick.ac.uk/careers/employers/internships/experience/ending