

# Employer Guide: Design an Internship

2024-2025

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CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

# What is an internship?

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NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) defines an internship as a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting (across in-person, remote, or hybrid modalities). Internships provide students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience, develop social capital, explore career fields, and make connections in professional fields. In addition, internships serve as a significant recruiting mechanism for employers, providing them with the opportunity to guide and evaluate potential candidates.

**At RMU,**

**we believe that co-curricular engagements like internships are an important part of our students' college experience, enhancing their academic experience and helping them to get career ready.**

## Criteria for an experience to be defined as an internship

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To ensure that an experience is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the NACE definition, all the following criteria must be met:

- A learning experience with a real-world opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or replace the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- Learned skills and knowledge that are transferable to other employment settings.
- A defined beginning and end that is mutually agreed upon and consistent with institutional
- A position description with clear responsibilities and required / desired qualifications.
- Clearly defined learning objectives / goals supportive of the student's academic program goals and institutional requirements.
- Direct supervision by a professional(s) with relevant expertise and educational and / or professional experience who provides productive feedback, guidance, and the resources and equipment necessary to successfully complete the assignment.

# Benefits of an internship

# 8 out of 10

According to a recent NACE quick poll, eight out of ten employers said that internships provided the best return on investment as a recruiting strategy for college level students.

## Benefits to Students

- Gain experience in their major
- Build career ready competencies
- Develop a professional network and make industry connections
- Understand the relationship between classroom theory and workplace practice
- Clarify career goals
- Increase opportunity for employment after graduation
- Potential to earn academic credit

## Benefits to the Employer

- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential permanent employees
- Benefit from the academic expertise and enthusiasm of RMU students
- Explore new and innovative ideas from student perspectives
- Maintain connections with colleges and increase visibility on campus

# 1.40 vs 0.90

According to the results of the NACE 2023 Student Survey for four-year college students, those who had paid internships received an average of 1.4 job offers, compared to 0.9 offers for unpaid interns.



# Develop the program

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This guide is to assist you with the development, implementation, and evaluation of your internship program. The Career and Professional Development Center at RMU is an excellent resource for questions and assistance during the process.

## Assess your need for an internship and set a goal

- Assess your organizational needs to determine tasks/projects that would be beneficial to your organization and create an educational, interesting, and rewarding experience for the intern.
- Gain support from your team by clearly communicating program goals and learning objectives.

## Write a plan


**Determine specific program details. Questions to consider:**

- Will the intern work on a specific project or generally support the workplace?
- Will the intern be paid? If so, how much? (RMU prefers paid internships)
- How many hours per week will the intern work?
- Can program expectations be flexible to accommodate academic requirements during the internship?
- Who will the intern report to?
- Will the intern have a mentor?

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**Create an internship/job description that clearly explains the intern's duties or project. The job description should align with the goals your company wishes to accomplish with an internship. In return, the internship should involve tasks and projects that complement the student's academic programs.**

**The job description should include:**

- Job Title
  - Brief description of your company/organization
  - Job description - list specific duties the intern will be asked to perform as well as other potential projects that could come up
  - Skills required and/or desired
  - Required Major(s) and GPA if applicable
  - Time of year and length of opportunity
  - Schedule desired - hours per week, time of day, etc.
  - Compensation
  - Specify how to apply
  - Application deadline
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# Develop the program (continued)

## Compensation

- It is recommended that all employers offer some form of compensation.
- According to the 2023 NACE Internship and Co-op Report, the bachelors level average hourly wage is \$21.56 (\$19.20 per hour Pittsburgh region)
- The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which applies to all companies that have at least two employees directly engaged in interstate commerce and annual sales of at least \$500,000.00, severely restricts an employer's ability to use unpaid interns or trainees. It does not limit an employer's ability to hire paid interns. Learn more at: <http://bit.ly/DoLFactSheet71>.
- For an unpaid internship program to meet regulations, interns must be gaining experience directly correlated their major or academic coursework and provide ongoing professional development and mentorship.

## RMU Academic Internships

**235 RMU students completed an academic internship, totaling 769 overall credits.**

**The average hourly wage for RMU undergraduate interns is \$20.47 (based on 2024-2025 academic year)**

## Academic Credit

- RMU students can receive academic credit for participating in a paid or unpaid internship.
- Academic internships integrate a student's academic and career interests with productive work experience. Students gain experience with supervision from a faculty member.
- Academic internships must be pre-approved by the student's department head.
- It is the responsibility of the student to connect with the Career and Professional Development Center to receive registration information and complete the proper paperwork to receive credit.

## International Students

- International students are eligible to work in internships after the first year of their academic program.
- They do not require visa sponsorships to participate in U.S. internships and there are no extra costs involved with their internship employment.
- International students have a least 12 months of U.S. work authorization after graduation and STEM students are eligible for a 24-month extensions.
- RMU's Center for Global Engagement arranges the Curricular Practical Training visa to ensure legal compliance. If you have any questions you can contact them directly at [internationaloffice@rmu.edu](mailto:internationaloffice@rmu.edu).

# Develop the program (continued)



## Recruit Interns

- Employers who wish to recruit RMU students must become an approved employer on Handshake.
- As an approved employer, you will be able to post jobs, set up interviews (on-campus and virtual) and attend career fairs to recruit for the internship position.
- The RMU Career Center can also share your job/internship opportunity with our students via email, internal connections and social media. In order to share, the following information must be included via a job link or flier:
  - Brief description of your company
  - Description of the job
  - Rate of pay
  - Benefits offered (include whether it is in-person, remote or hybrid)
  - Information on how to apply
- Recruit early! Give yourself plenty of time to gather resumes, properly review candidates, and interview potential interns.

## Manage the Interns

- Orient the intern to your organization; acquaint the intern to the mission, vision, and policies of your company along with team introductions.
- Set specific professional and career goals for the internship.
- Teach the intern about the working world and consider serving as a mentor.
- Explain the organizational structure and illustrate the company culture.
- Set expectations for your projects.
- Discuss projects regularly and expected outcomes (decide on start and end dates in advance).
- Schedule a mid-semester evaluation and an exit interview to provide a forum for constructive feedback and questions.



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412.397.6333  
[careercenter@rmu.edu](mailto:careercenter@rmu.edu)