

What is a High Quality Internship?

1. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
2. The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
4. There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
5. There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
6. There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
7. There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.
8. Provide substantive and challenging work experiences
9. Planning and structure of position prior to student beginning internship (breadth and depth); (minimal "go-fer" clerical work); opportunity to apply principles learned in and outside the classroom; realistic goals/projects; predetermined outputs to make up a formal portfolio that the intern can show future employers as evidence of their work and accomplishments.
10. Strong training/orientation for student(s), including company culture, office procedures, etc. in addition to training for specific job duties.
On-going *structured supervision* by a primary supervisor that includes regularly scheduled (at least weekly) meetings; opportunities for feedback; adequate opportunities for students to ask questions; meet monthly to review progress on supervisor's and student's learning goals; ideally, a mentoring* relationship.
11. Opportunity to *observe professionals* in action: participate in staff meetings, client meetings, attend presentations and/or conference workshops, and talk with professionals in the department about their jobs and career paths.
12. Opportunity to *develop specific skills* (i.e. research, writing, computer, presentation skills).
13. Provide *evaluation* of overall experience; provide closure through recognition of intern contributions, reflection on learning experiences, and wrap-up on-going projects; provide follow-up if necessary (letters of recommendation, networking, etc.)
14. Some organizations provide *professional development opportunities* (e.g. presentations by upper-management to all interns within the organization, informational interviews, brown bag lunch seminars, etc.) and if there are multiple interns in a new location, some organizations provide social opportunities (picnics, movie night, etc.).
15. Encourage and provide *opportunities to read* professional and company publications.

Sources: National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Position Statement on U.S. Internships: <http://www.naceweb.org/advocacy/position-statements/united-states-internships.aspx>

Thanks to Julie Agee Gillaspay, Southern Methodist University and John Sullivan, San Francisco State University for some of this list.