

Guidelines & Responsibilities for Employing Interns **Graphic Design Internship for Credit**

Thank you for your interest in joining our internship program!

Hours Required

Student Interns receive 3 hours of academic credit for 120 hours of work completed over the course of one academic semester. Typically during a regular 15-week semester (fall or spring), this works out to be 8 hours a week. During a 5-week summer session, it's 24 hours a week.

Specific work schedules (days/times) are determined by the intern and the site supervisor. At the end of the semester, site supervisors will be required to confirm that the student has completed the required 120 hours on the *Internship for Credit Evaluation* form.

Once the student has completed 120 hours for course credit, they are under no obligation to continue working. However, if both parties do agree to continue, then we strongly recommend that the student be paid, if they are not already, since they can't get course credit for two internships with one organization.

Regarding Pay

Some interns are paid and some are not; that is your decision. However, if you offer a wage, stipend, or scholarship, we must know at the onset how much and when the payments will be made. Although not required, internships that are paid attract more applicants. Please consider the *US Department of Labor Guidelines Regarding Internship Programs* (see below) when determining how your intern will be treated in your organization/company.

Verification & Evaluation Process

Students are responsible for making sure all required forms are signed by the site supervisor and submitted to the instructor of record. Once the site supervisor has reviewed the *Intern Employer Responsibilities* and signed the *Application Form*, *Intern Employer Contract*, and *Job Description*, the instructor of record will review them and call the site supervisor to verify the internship experience. If an organization is employing an intern from UNC Charlotte for the first time, then the site supervisor must also complete the *New Employer Questions* form. Once a student's application has been approved, the site supervisor will receive an email from the instructor of record to verify that the internship has been approved and the student has been given a permit to register and receive course credit. Towards the end of the semester, the site supervisor will receive an email from the instructor of record requesting that they fill out an *Internship for Credit Evaluation* form. This must be completed before the student can receive a grade for the course.

Employer Responsibilities

The points below will help you set up an internship program that meets our course requirements.

Job Description

Employers must provide a detailed job description at the onset of the process, and a good one will help to attract and inspire applicants. In addition to the listing of duties and responsibilities, it should also include proper performance goals, objectives, and specific information regarding pay. The job description should be clear, exciting, and well-defined on your internship listing.

Important Note: Whenever possible, the host organization should provide a computer and/or any required software for the student to use while completing work for the organization. If a student uses their own equipment and/or software, they risk breaking their educational use license agreements.

Provide a Substantive Internship Experience

Interns must gain valuable experience related to the graphic design major or the broader field of visual communication. Interns should work under a site supervisor (designer, art director, etc) with at least one year of professional experience so that they have a mentor to learn from. If it is not under another designer, then the site supervisor should have related professional experience such as marketing, advertising, or applicable technical expertise. Unpaid interns should not be completing "for-profit" services or products, such as work that the employer is charging clients to produce. *Paid or unpaid interns should not be viewed as "cheap-labor" or solely used for clerical work.* Although it is expected that this type of work may be part of the intern's duties, the instructor may not approve an internship for credit if an intern is being used in a way that is not deemed beneficial to the student.

Good Communication & Feedback Are Key

If you hire more than one intern, please consider the amount of work assigned to each intern, as well as your ability to supervise and guide each intern. Providing suggestions for improvement of writing and related professional advice is expected as part of the learning experience. Site supervisors should have meetings at least weekly to communicate expectations and suggestions for improvement. Meeting virtually, by phone, and/or by email may work, but using such communication methods to oversee internship duties should be clarified at the onset of the internship.

Maintain a Professional Work Environment

Interns should be considered employees, and as such, they should be treated and should behave in a professional manner. The organization is responsible for maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for the intern. Interns should be treated under the same organizational policies as other employees in areas including sexual harassment.

Create an Engaging Internship Program

Engaging internship programs can attract great interns who will refer you to other talented interns upon completion of their internship. Sooner than later, your internship will be highly sought after (especially if it is also paid or carries a stipend). High-quality internships attract the top students in our program. In addition, engaging internship programs can help build your brand as a great work environment. Also, consider that the more invested your interns are, the more they will contribute to your business.

Tips for Keeping Interns Engaged

Help your interns to feel like they are “*part of the team.*” Encourage them to interact with other members of your staff.

- Use the job description to inspire interns. Some internship descriptions lack detail, including proper performance goals and objectives. *The job description should be clear, exciting, and well-defined* on your internship listing.
- Assign your interns with *real-world tasks* aimed at utilizing or enhancing their education. The intern should walk away with more skills and experiences than what they came with.
- *Be engaged with your intern’s progress.* Establish one-on-one meetings with your intern to review their performance and provide constructive feedback.
- View the internship as a *professional development opportunity* by allowing interns to learn from full-time staff members and ask questions as needed.

U.S. Department of Labor Guidelines Regarding Internship Programs

Background

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines the term “employ” broadly as including to “suffer or permit to work.” Covered and non-exempt individuals who are “suffered or permitted” to work must be compensated under the law for the services they perform for an employer.

Internships in the “for-profit” private sector will most often be viewed as employment, unless the test described below relating to trainees is met. Interns in the “for-profit” private sector who qualify as employees rather than trainees typically must be paid at least the minimum wage. In addition, overtime compensation for more than 40 hours of work in a week must be provided for long work weeks.

Unpaid Internships

There are some circumstances under which individuals who participate in “for-profit” private sector internships or training programs may do so without compensation. The Supreme Court has held that the term “suffer or permit to work” cannot be interpreted so as to make a person whose work serves only his or her own interest an employee of another who provides aid or instruction. This policy may apply to interns who receive training for their own educational benefit if the training meets certain criteria. The determination of whether an internship or training program meets the exclusion for payment depends upon all of the facts and circumstances of the program.

Listed below are six criteria for determining whether an intern can be unpaid:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is *similar to training that would be given in an educational environment.*
2. The internship experience is for the *benefit of the intern.*
3. The intern *does not displace regular employees* but works under close supervision of existing staff
4. The employer that provides the training *derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern*, and on occasion, its operations may actually be impeded.
5. The intern is *not necessarily entitled to a job* at the conclusion of the internship.
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is *not entitled to wages* for the time spent in the internship.

If all of the factors listed above are met, an employment relationship does not exist under the FLSA, and the Act's minimum wage and overtime provisions do not apply to the intern. This exclusion from the definition of employment is necessarily narrow because the FLSA's definition of "employ" is broad. Some of the most commonly discussed factors for "for-profit" private sector internship programs are considered below.

Examples of Improper Practices of Unpaid Interns

- *Charging clients* for work that unpaid interns complete.
- Having work completed by unpaid interns that are generally done by paid employees and *in lieu of payment, the students receive "opportunities and connections."*
- Promising interns that they will build design skills during the internship, but instead are tasked with updating databases, answering phones, or *gaining little experience that will be helpful* in advancing knowledge.

Best Practices for Intern Employers

- Internships should comply with federal and state requirements, and *unpaid internships must meet all DOL guidelines* in this document.
- All internships should be *paid if "real" billable work is accomplished.*
- The ingredients for a successful intern experience are built into the process from the beginning:
 - The work is an integral part of the student's course of study.
 - The student receives experience relevant to a career in their field of study.
 - The intern is supervised by a knowledgeable staff member who takes responsibility to provide a productive learning experience.