



Saint Martin's UNIVERSITY

STUDENT INTERNSHIP GUIDE

Updated Fall 2022

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BASICS OF AN INTERNSHIP

What is an internship?

An internship is a form of experiential learning and is an opportunity to enhance classroom learning and gain practical experience in an industry related to a student's field of study for a fixed, limited period of time. Internships can be full- or part-time, paid or unpaid, and for-credit or not for-credit. They can be found in corporate, private, government, and nonprofit organizations.

All internships should have the primary goal of providing students an opportunity to learn career-related skills and knowledge.

Internship vs. part-time job

Internship	Part-time job
Completed for possible options: credit/no credit; credit and pay; pay/no pay	Completed for monetary purposes
Learning objectives reflect the goals of the student, the outcomes expected by the employer, and the requirements of the Faculty Internship Advisor (if for credit)	Learn tasks of job in order to complete the work adequately but not necessarily for personal gain
Projects or ongoing work that is purposeful and of professional nature	Assigned work that needs to be completed, not necessarily professional in nature
Typically part-time (10-20 hours/week) in a semester or a summer (2-3 months); occasionally extended into next semester or year	No specific start/end date or designated time frame
Supervisor serves as a mentor figure to aid the student in the learning process	Supervisor serves as an authority figure to whom the employee reports
Allows for learning of transferable skills that you do not yet possess	Serves to fill a basic position within the place of employment
The opportunity to obtain "real world" experience in your field of interest and learn first-hand about companies, careers	

Credit/non-credit internship

Some academic departments at Saint Martin's require internships (below) and many others offer internships as elective credit within the major. It is important that you consult with the department's Faculty Internship Advisor to ensure that you are complying with the internship guidelines set by your department if you are completing the internship for-credit.

Undergraduate programs that require an internship for-credit

Communication Studies
Environmental Studies
Nursing
Psychology
Social Work
Education

What are the benefits of doing an internship?

According to the 2018 Job Outlook survey¹ conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), internships are one of the most effective recruiting methods for hiring new college graduates. Completing an internship within the organization a student is applying to, or having internship experience related to the industry, were the top two attributes employers looked for on an applicant's resume. Internships can serve as extended interviews allowing companies to more fully evaluate a student's potential, strengths, weaknesses, and fit in the company culture.

In this survey, employers rated the attributes they seek on candidates' resumes:

- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Communication skills (written)
- Leadership
- Strong work ethic
- Analytical/quantitative skills
- Communication skills (verbal)
- Initiative
- Detail-oriented
- Flexibility/adaptability

These attributes are developed and strengthened when students complete an internship. An internship can help you:

- Improve your chances of getting a job
- Increase your starting salary
- Explore professional interests and career paths
- Gain technical skills and knowledge not taught in the classroom
- Build networking contacts and reference
- Enhance sense of self, independent, and self-confidence
- Improve communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and related skills

FINDING AN INTERNSHIP

When to start

Finding an internship can take a lot of work, planning, and time. It will likely take several months from when you start to look for an internship to when you accept an offer. For example, you should start looking for an internship as early as the fall semester before the summer when you want to do an internship. Most students do their first internship after their sophomore year, but many start as early as the summer after their freshman year. The fall is when most of the bigger companies will be advertising and interviewing for summer internships. Dates vary by field; always check Handshake and the specific company employment site for updates.

NOTE: The Career Center is hosting an Internship & Service Fair on September 30, 2021 through the Handshake system. A great opportunity for students to find an internship for the 2021/2022 academic year.

¹ <http://www.nacweb.org/about-us/press/2017/the-key-attributes-employers-seek-on-students-resumes/>

Finding an internship

The Career Center's Internship Navigators can help you search for an internship. Alysia Bean (abean@stmartin.edu) is the Internship Navigator for the College of Arts & Sciences, and Carina Bissett (cbissett@stmartin.edu) is the Internship Navigator for Business, Engineering/Computer Science & Education. The hard part about internships is that many are not posted online like you would normally see a job, but instead developed through networking. A good starting point is [Handshake](#), Saint Martin's job posting system.

Online Search

There are many online search engines you can use to find an internship. Below is a list of some places you can check:

<https://stmartin.joinhandshake.com/login>

<http://careers.wa.gov/>

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/>

<https://www.indeed.com/>

<https://www.idealists.org>

Career Conversations

Career Conversations, or Information interviews, are one of the best ways to learn more about an internship or industry. This is an informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you who is willing to give you information about a job, career field, industry or work setting. The goal is not to find a job or internship, but to get more information (which can sometimes lead to an opportunity!). Start by identifying people to interview. Think of people you already know, even if they are not in your field of interest. They can lead to people who are. Search LinkedIn for professionals, *especially alumni*, and attend networking events to make connections. Many of the recruiters who attend the [Career & Internship Fairs](#) are great people to sit down with for an information interview.

Once you know who you would like to contact, reach out to them by email, phone, or letter. We recommend reaching out to multiple people so you have the best chance of setting up a conversation. Below is a sample of an email to send a potential contact.

Dear _____,

I am a junior majoring in _____ at Saint Martin's University and spoke with you briefly at the Career Fair last semester.

Although I am not currently looking for a job, I am very interested in learning all I can about careers in the field of _____ and what skills I might make a point of developing during my last year at SMU. I would greatly appreciate 15 to 20 minutes of your time to ask you a few questions about your role as _____, as well as other types of work in the field.

Thank you for your consideration. I will contact you next week to arrange a convenient time to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Prepare for the career conversation by developing a quick introduction of yourself, including why you have contacted them. Try an [Elevator Pitch](#) if you are having trouble coming up with the introduction. Plan open ended questions to keep the conversation going instead of yes or no questions. You can conduct this interview in person or over the phone. If it is in person, dress appropriately in order to make a positive impression. Make sure they know the purpose of the meeting is to get information and advice, not a job. You can take notes if you'd like, ask for their card, and ask for suggestions for others you can reach out to. Check out our [Information Interview page](#) for possible questions you can ask.

After the interview, be sure to send a thank you note within a couple days to expression your appreciations. In that note, you can mention that you followed up on their advice and tell them how things are going for you. This relationship you have just developed with a simple information interview could become an important part of you professional network!

Considerations before you apply

- Do not apply to an internship that you are sure you will not accept.
- Pay close attention to the location of the internship and make sure you are able and willing to find housing and transportation.
- Be sure to check if an internship is “virtual” or in-person and take caution when applying for “virtual” internships. There are more virtual internship opportunities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we still recommend working with an Internship Navigator to ensure validity.
- Pay close attention to the job description and make sure you will be doing meaningful work with a professional mentor. If the description is unclear, call and get more information. Do not accept a position that is just busy work.
- Ask about the learning opportunities you will be offered and what professional tools and skills you will develop during the internship. Make sure the internship will help further your career.
- Be wary of unpaid or low-paying internships.

Remember, you can always reach out to an Internship Navigator to support you in this!

APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP

Resume & cover letter

Almost all jobs or internships will ask for a resume and cover letter. Recruiters spend only a few seconds on each resume, so it's very important to make sure everything on your resume applies to their position! You can also make an appointment to meet with someone in the Internship Hub or Career Center to develop your application documents.

Social Media

Before you send in any application, it is important to:

- Clean up, delete, or make private your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and similar profiles
- Start or update your LinkedIn profile as many employers use this networking tool
- Search for yourself online and see what comes up

Assume every potential employer will do a search for you on social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, and do a general search for information about you on the internet. Many will use personal information that they find on these sites to reject applicants. Employers reject applicants because of provocative or inappropriate photos or information, drinking or drug use, or even talking negative of previous employees, colleagues or supervisors.

The best way to impress is to remove access to all personal profiles and information and have a well-written, professional LinkedIn profile with a **professional** photo. We have a photographer (who is also an SMU alum!) ready to take professional headshots of students. Employers like to see that you have a LinkedIn profile and are even more impressed when they find that you have looked at their LinkedIn profile. Stop by the Internship Hub or Career Center if you would like help building your LinkedIn profile, and remember to connect with the Hub and Center team!

INTERVIEWING

Before the interview

- Research the company and the position. Make sure to save the original internship posting in case they take it down. Find out as much as you can about the organization!
- Find out who you will be meeting with and get as much information about what they do/have done. Check to see if they have a LinkedIn profile.
- Know the position you are applying for. Know what they are looking for and how you match the qualifications. If you don't have some of the qualifications, think of some ideas for how you could work on them or how you would respond if the interviewer brought it up.
- Think about how you would answer common interview questions (see Common Interview Questions below), but don't spend too much time memorizing answers; you risk the chance of sounding rehearsed or robotic.
- Practice interviewing with mock interview. You can schedule mock interviews with anyone in the Career Center.

Make sure to find out what type of interview you will have. Types of interviews include:

One-on-one: You and one interviewer.

Panel: You are interviewed by more than one person at the same time.

Group: A group of candidates is interviewed by a panel or one interviewer.

Meal: You are interviewed while eating (attend an Etiquette Dinner to practice for this!).

Phone or video: Often used as a screening tool before inviting you to an on-site interview. Video has become incredibly common, especially as a screening interview.

On-site or second round: After you have made it through a screening interview, this is a more extended interview at the employer site that may include a series of different types of interviews, a site tour, and a meal.

Attire

First impressions count! Always err on the conservative side for attire, and dress to impress.

Clothing

- Dark dress pants or skirt, button down, solid blouse, collared shirt, possibly a blazer. If it is a more conservative business environment, invest in a business suit in a dark color.

Accessories/Appearance

- Polished shoes and matching belt, socks that cover calves when sitting down, small jewelry, light makeup, closed toe shoes with small heel or flats. If using nail polish, select light, neutral colors. New haircut, shaved, no strong cologne or perfume.

General Notes

- Stick with dark, conservative colors (black, gray, blue). Bring a briefcase/portfolio. Make sure you are well-groomed, your clothes are wrinkle-free, nails are clean, and your clothing fits correctly.
- NO jeans, logos, open-toed shoes, t-shirts, shorts, hats, or other extremely casual pieces of clothing.
- NO undergarments should be visible, ever (boxers, camisole straps, etc.).

Make sure to try out your outfit before the interview. Iron and get everything ready the night before. It is very stressful to start ironing the morning of your interview and realize you have a huge stain on your interview shirt! When in doubt about the dress code, ask the interviewer, someone at the company (i.e. Human Resources), or a colleague.

NOTE: While these are the general recommendations for interview attire, keep in mind that all company cultures are different! Some are much more formal, and some are very casual. *If you are ever questioning what to wear to an interview, contact the Career Center.*

Common interview questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Why should we hire you? What qualifications do you have that will make you successful?
- What is an accomplishment that has given you the most satisfaction, and why?
- What skills have you acquired from your on-campus/part-time jobs?
- Have you ever been in a group project where there were difficulties? How were these issues revealed?
- Tell me about a time you have made a mistake that negatively impacted the team/group.
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to new situations.
- Provide an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Provide an example of when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you approach it?

Questions you can ask them

- What is the top priority of the person who accepts this job?
- Why did you come to work here?
- What is a project you are currently working on?
- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of this position?
- What are the traits and skills of people who are the most successful within the organization?

THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Handshake Experiences

Internships For-Credit

Some professors will require that you process your internship paperwork, assignments and evaluations through Handshake Experiences. In this system, you will upload all details and track your experience. Please talk to your faculty advisor about this.

Internships Not For-Credit

We recommend students follow the process on Handshake Experiences and upload their not for-credit internship into the system. This will help with tracking of the experience and notify us you are completing it. This will allow us to provide any support needed during the completion of your internship. Please reach out to the Internship Navigator of your school/college for support in this (contact information at end of document).

Orientation

Employers should provide an adequate orientation during your first few days. This might include:

- Introduction of the team you will work with
- Learning objectives, initial job assignments and training plans
- Performance expectations and standards
- Supervision plan and/or mentor introductions
- Position schedule and hours
- Payroll information and timecards (if applicable)
- Review of company policies and procedures

Expectations, roles & responsibilities

Internships are often viewed by employers as a lengthy interview to assess the student's candidacy for full-time employment. Many internships turn into full-time jobs! This is an opportunity to obtain professional references and contacts for future employment. Students are expected to behave professionally throughout the duration of the internship.

- Follow the rules at all times – respect the dress code, be punctual to work and company/organization events.
- Avoid things like texting during meetings, violating personal conduct standards, gossip, long talks with other interns or employees, making personal calls on your cell phone, etc.
- Take notes, keep a journal and ask questions
- Be positive and prepared to work daily
- Keep a record of your successes and accomplishments
- Keep the lines of communication open with your supervisor/mentor. Share your satisfaction with assigned projects as well as your concerns if they demands are proving too much to handle.

While the university and Career Center does its best to ensure internships are legal and appropriate, we cannot guarantee that all employers will adhere to labor laws or university policy. *We strongly encourage you to visit the Career Center, a sponsoring faculty member, or your department head if you have any concerns regarding your treatment and/or responsibilities.* Below is a list of tips that can help you determine if your internship is legitimate.

- Some administrative responsibilities can be expected; however, you should not serve as a personal assistant, filing clerk or receptionist.
- Supervision should be provided by a professional with expertise or appropriate credential. Examples include:
 - A graphic design intern should be supervised by a graphic designer.
 - An information systems intern should be supervised by an experienced IS professional.
 - A journalism major should be supervised by a journalist, editor or writer.
- Clearly defined goals and/or assigned projects should be given and should relate to your major.
- The internship should benefit you more than it does the employer.

How to handle dissatisfaction with internship experience

In the event that you are dissatisfied with your internship experience, consider the following:

- You may still need a reference letter. Be careful not to burn bridges or engage in gossip. Be professional, even if you are disappointed. You should share the experience with the Career Center or Faculty Internship Advisor.
- Focus on the positives. What did you learn during the internship that is relevant to your major or that you can use later in your professional career?
- If you are feeling uncomfortable or uncertain about how to handle a particular situation, reach out to the Career Center, faculty member or other trusted professional.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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