

# What You Need to Know about Internships

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## ***What is an internship and how is it different from other forms of work?***

"An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. Credit-bearing internships are overseen by a college educator and by a designated employee of an organization. The internship is usually the length or equivalent of an academic term, may be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid. An integral component of the experience that distinguishes it from other types of work is structured and deliberate learning objectives and corresponding reflection activities."

*\*Definition informed by the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#) and the primary [Internship Professionals listserve](#)*

## ***What specific parameters comprise a quality internship?***

- The experience is complementary to and an extension of classroom learning; it gives the student an opportunity to apply what they are learning in a professional setting.
- The employer understands that an internship is first and foremost a learning experience for the student. The benefits to the employer of having an intern are secondary.
- The experience comes with a professional-level job description and desired qualifications. The intern will perform work assignments that result in professional experience and skills that they will take with them following the conclusion of the experience.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the student's professional goals.
- Quality and consistent supervision is provided by a professional with expertise and the appropriate educational background. The supervisor invests time in helping the student meet his/her learning objectives, along with orientation and guidance on organizational culture, expectations, and roles.
- There is routine, constructive feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support the student's learning objectives/goals.

## ***Why do an internship for academic credit?***

- Successful completion of credit-bearing internships supervised through the Career and Professional Development are approved to fulfill a student's ELI requirement.
- Many sites only host students who are receiving academic credit for their experience due to liability concerns.

- Corresponding internship coursework helps promote reflection on and development of personal and professional skills.
- Credit-bearing internships are noted on a student's transcript.
- Students are protected legally under Messiah College liability policy.
- Students receive support, advocacy and guidance from an Internship Faculty Advisor in addition to their on-site supervisor.