



Student Internship Handbook



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Helpful Contact Information



Career Services
Hill Center for Student Success

career@aurora.edu

630-844-5403

Internship Assistance

internships@aurora.edu

Schedule an appointment on Handshake



WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a chance to learn new skills and expertise and to practice concepts and theories learned in the classroom. Your internship experiences are an important addition to your resume and a significant step toward achieving your career goals. Internships provide students with the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience, develop social capital, explore career fields, and make connections in the professional workforce.

“An internship is 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.”

—National Association of Colleges & Employers

WHY ARE INTERNSHIPS IMPORTANT?

Internships are an important way to complement your education by providing you with hands-on experience and a valuable glimpse into what your future career could look like, while also giving tremendous networking opportunities.

“Paid interns averaged 1.61 job offers, compared to 0.94 offers for unpaid internships, and 0.77 offers for non-interns”

—NACE 2022 Student Survey results

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERNSHIP



Start your search at least six months prior to the term in which you plan to complete an internship.



Create a list of companies/industries you would like to pursue following graduation. Research whether they hire interns and if so, what their application process entails and when their hiring seasons fall.



Define your goals for the internship and what you want to gain.



Reach out to our network (peers, family, friends, and faculty) to let them know that you are looking for an internship. Many opportunities arise from networking and referrals.



STEPS TO SECURE AN INTERNSHIP

Be aware that some of these steps may occur concurrently.

1. If you want to receive course credit for an internship, talk with your academic advisor about which semester the experience would fit best into your overall academic plan and align with recruiting cycles. Register for the corresponding internship course in the appropriate term when available.
2. Determine what you want to accomplish in your internship and how many credit hours you want to earn for the experience. Note that most majors require internships to be worth 4 credits. See table 1 on page 7 for specific details.
3. Find out who your faculty advisor will be and let them know you are searching for internship opportunities. Faculty advisors are typically the program chair for your major.
4. Meet with Career Services to create — or in some cases, refine — your resume. Learn how to write compelling cover letters and craft professional portfolios, too, if your internship applications require them.
5. Update your Handshake and LinkedIn profiles because recruiters will likely review these pages before reaching out to you.
6. Identify internship opportunities through networking, meeting with Career Services, talking to your faculty members, and searching online. See table 2 on page 7 for a list of websites that will be helpful when conducting your search.
7. Create a spreadsheet to list companies that interest you, so you can track application deadlines, recruiter information, dates you applied, followed up, etc.
8. Apply for established internship positions and contact any organizations of interest to potentially create your own internship. Apply and reach out as much as possible to maximize your reach and chances of securing an internship. Meet with Career Services to tailor your resume, cover letter, and portfolio to each job description, aligning with the companies' values and goals.
9. Secure interviews and send thank-you emails to everyone with whom you interviewed within 24 hours of the meeting.
10. When you secure an internship, let the Campus Internship Coordinator know and submit the experience to Handshake. See page 7 for instructions.
11. Keep an eye on your inbox to ensure your internship submission receives the necessary approvals from the Campus Internship Coordinator, your site supervisor, and your faculty advisor.
12. During your internship, track your hours and complete the necessary check-in assignments in your internship Brightspace shell.
13. After the internship, be sure you and your supervisor complete the survey and evaluation that Handshake sends via email (typically a few weeks before the end of the semester).
14. If, for any reason, you do not secure an internship in time for the start of the planned semester, be sure to drop the internship course and replace it with another course, if necessary. Consult the academic calendar for important add/drop deadlines. Talk with your advisor about when you have room in your schedule to try completing the internship again.



CREATING YOUR OWN INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Many smaller to mid-size companies may not have the resources to have a designated recruiter for potential internship positions, but they may still be open to bringing an intern onboard. Below are some tips to create your own opportunity.

Research Companies

Spend some time creating a spreadsheet to list companies that interest you and are in your desired career path. The spreadsheet will help you keep track of the organizations you are applying to as well as the contact person's name and information.

Create a Proposal

Based on your research, develop a proposal for your ideal internship within that organization. An email to each organization is a great place to start. The message should include:

- A detailed description of what it is you are offering to do for the company and how they will benefit
- Why you are the right person to do this for the company
- The detailed skills you possess to complete applicable tasks
- Internship requirements like start/end dates and number of required hours
- Your resume, portfolio, and other necessary documentation

Pro Tip: Have your resume and email drafts reviewed by Career Services before sending!

Sample Outreach Letter:

Beginning Paragraph: Share what you know about the company and what you like about the mission and/or the service that they provide. Share that you are interested in pursuing an internship at their company, but you did not see any official positions. Ask if they have any plans for any such role or if they would be willing to bring on an intern to join the team. Describe your area of interest or the main project you want to work on with the company — what do you want to improve for them?

Middle Paragraph: Outline your skills and what you bring to the team. Include any past work experience, relevant coursework, and projects you have completed that will show your skills.

Closing Paragraph: Ask if they would be interested in meeting in person or scheduling a call to discuss further.

Who to Contact: The Human Resources department is a good place to start, but if the company does not have an HR department, research to see if you can find a different contact in the area you would like to intern.



SUBMITTING YOUR INTERNSHIP TO HANDSHAKE FOR APPROVAL

Think of this as the “internship paperwork” step. It’s a digital form on Handshake that you fill out, which is then sent to the Campus Internship Coordinator, your site supervisor, and a faculty advisor for approval. Follow these instructions to submit this information.

Before submitting the internship, be sure that you...

- Know your site supervisor’s name and contact information. The individual’s information you enter is who we will contact for approval, which is a required step for earning course credit.
- Have a position description for your internship. This is a paragraph or list of bullet points that outlines your specific tasks and responsibilities at the internship site; it should not be just a general overview of the position. Most internships already have an established position description, and it’s usually included on the job posting or application. If that’s the case for your internship, you can just copy and paste that information into Handshake (the second to last question on the form). If your internship does not have an official position description, contact your supervisor to have them write one for you.
- Proofread everything you entered. Your supervisor and faculty advisor will see this form, so be sure it’s accurate and professional.

LEGALESE

As an intern, you’re responsible for the following, including but not limited to:

- Transportation to and from interviews and your internship site
- Background checks and tests required to secure the internship
- Obtaining a letter of intent, if required. Contact the Campus Internship Coordinator to request one
- Obtaining a recommendation letter, if required. Contact a faculty or staff member with whom you have a good relationship who can speak to your qualifications for the position

TABLE 1: Hours Worked Versus Semester Hours Earned*

Number of Credits	Required Clock Hours Worked
1	49
2	97
3	145
4	193

*Note that almost all majors require internships to be worth 4 credit hours. Confirm your program’s requirements and policies regarding internship credit.

TABLE 2: Internship/Job Search Engines

- Handshake
- LinkedIn
- Indeed
- themuse.com
- NPO.net



TIMELINES

Begin planning for internships at least one semester prior to your preferred term for completing the experience. Below are approximate timelines for the internship process. If you stay in touch with the Campus Internship Coordinator, flexibility is allowed.

TABLE 3: Deadlines*

Preferred Internship Term	Aim to have Internship Secured by...
Fall	August 1
Spring	December 1
Summer	April 15

*Note: We understand that many employers have lengthy selection processes or delayed application cycles that are out of students' control, so these deadlines are flexible if the student stays in regular contact with the Campus Internship Coordinator. Larger companies recruit for summer internships as early as September of the preceeding year. Students seeking these internships should shift this timeline accordingly—it's never too early to start!

Fall Internships	February–March	Meet with your academic advisor to confirm semester for internship. Register for course (if you haven't already).
	April	Research companies that hire interns in your field, and network with faculty, staff, family, friends, and peers.
	May	Have your resume and cover letter reviewed by Career Services.
	June	Start searching and applying for internships. Schedule interviews as you hear back from employers – check in with the Campus Internship Coordinator if you aren't receiving calls back. Be prepared for multiple rounds of interviews. Discuss interview preparation and conduct mock interviews with Career Services.
	July	Accept an offer! Touch base with Campus Internship Coordinator and submit to Handshake for approval.
Summer Internships	November–December	Meet with your academic advisor to confirm semester for internship. Register for course (if you haven't already).
	January	Research companies that hire interns in your field, and network with faculty, staff, family, friends, and peers.
	February	Have your resume and cover letter reviewed by Career Services.
	March	Start searching and applying for internships. Schedule interviews as you hear back from employers – check in with the Campus Internship Coordinator if you aren't receiving calls back. Be prepared for multiple rounds of interviews. Discuss interview preparation and conduct mock interviews with Career Services.
	April	Accept an offer! Touch base with Campus Internship Coordinator and submit to Handshake for approval.
Spring Internships	June–July	Meet with your academic advisor to confirm semester for internship. Register for course (if you haven't already).
	August	Research companies that hire interns in your field, and network with faculty, staff, family, friends, and peers.
	September	Have your resume and cover letter reviewed by Career Services.
	October	Start searching and applying for internships. Schedule interviews as you hear back from employers – check in with the Campus Internship Coordinator if you aren't receiving calls back. Be prepared for multiple rounds of interviews. Discuss interview preparation and conduct mock interviews with Career Services.
	November	Accept an offer! Touch base with Campus Internship Coordinator and submit to Handshake for approval.



ON-THE-JOB TIPS

On your first day at your internship, be sure to...

- Arrive early — at least 15 minutes!
- Ask about any policies and procedures you should be aware of. (Ex: who you should communicate with about being sick, policies on taking lunch, going on break, etc.)
- Express your enthusiasm for the role and confirm your internship goals align with the supervisor's expectations — hours, tasks, end date, etc.

During your internship, remember...

Professionalism

- Use professional email etiquette – greeting, closing, subject line, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Avoid hitting “reply all” in most situations.
- Unless your role requires that you utilize social media, plan to keep your phone out of view in most situations.
- Be open to constructive feedback and view it as an opportunity to enhance your skills. Treat your supervisor as if they were a faculty member teaching you in a course.
- Maintain confidentiality boundaries.
- Avoid office politics and gossip.
- Ask questions!

Attire

- Research and take note of the company's attire policies. Do employees wear business professional, business casual, or casual attire? Feel free to ask your supervisor for clarification if necessary.

Network

- Learn people's names and introduce yourself to others in the office and building. This is a great way to show your enthusiasm!
- Attend any company meet and greets or team events for which you are eligible.
- If your schedule allows, schedule informational interviews with colleagues.
- Follow up with those you meet with via email to briefly express your appreciation.
- Ask about professional organizations in your field.
- Update your LinkedIn and Handshake profiles and connect with team members.

When wrapping up your internship, be sure to...

- Update your colleagues on any unfinished projects and assignments.
- Ask for a wrap-up meeting with your supervisor.
- Share your gratitude – write a thank-you card for the opportunity.
- Gauge whether your supervisor would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation or serve as a reference in the future.
- Update your resume and LinkedIn/Handshake profiles to include the internship experience.



NACE COMPETENCIES

Below are the top competencies, reported by employers, that lead students to be the best prepared for their careers and maintain a successful career journey.



Professionalism

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability.
- Demonstrate dependability.



Communication

- Communicate in a clear, organized, and timely manner.
- Actively listen to improve mutual understanding.



Critical Thinking

- Gather and analyze information to understand the problem.
- Make decisions using reasoning and judgment.



Teamwork

- Collaborate with teammates.
- Take responsibility for your role on the team.
- Manage conflict on the team.



Technology

- Identify appropriate technology for the task.
- Use technology to achieve goals.



Leadership

- Inspire and motivate yourself and others.
- Approach tasks with a positive attitude.



Equity and Inclusion

- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.
- Include feedback from multiple cultural perspectives.



Career and Self-Development

- Recognize your strengths and areas for development.
- Develop plans and goals for your future career.

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