

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS?



Confused about the different types of internships? Check out this guide for some helpful hints on how to tell the difference...

1. Cooperative Education (co-op)

A co-op is a three-way partnership between a student, an employer, and a college or university. It allows students to integrate work experience into their academic studies for credit. Many colleges endorse cooperative education by partnering with a variety of employers to provide career-related opportunities. Participating students work in jobs that relate to their majors. For example, if you are studying animal behavior or zoology, you might be able to get a part-time job at your local zoo.

2. Practicum

Practica offer students the chance to apply their academic experience to a real-world project. Students work in teams or individually under the joint supervision of an employer and an academic adviser. Practica increase your standing in the job or graduate-school market and facilitate networking with professionals in your field of interest. A sample practicum might assign a group of MBA students to a semester-long project sponsored by a consulting firm and supervised by a faculty member.

To set up a practicum, you meet with your academic advisor or department head and target sites that are tailored to your personal, educational, and career goals. One senior management consultant says, "There is no substitute for experience. The practicum program assists students in preparing for their transition to the business world. It gives them a valuable edge over their peers in today's competitive marketplace.

Practica offer employers a valuable resource for short-term project needs and inject the refreshing perspective of tomorrow's young professionals." Some popular practicum sites include the American Bar Association, American Civil Liberties Union, KPMG Peat Marwick, AT Kearney, Baxter Healthcare, and Children's Memorial Hospital.

3. Externship

Externships are distinguished by their short duration. The student spends a short period of time (usually one to three weeks) observing and often working with professionals in their career field of choice. Students experience a typical day on the job and observe the work environment and demands of the career.

Externships enable you to investigate a career field without making a long-term commitment. They are most common in the legal and medical fields and are unpaid. For pre-med students, externships usually involve shadowing a medical doctor in the emergency room or in a high-volume clinic. For first-year law students, legal externships are often a brief clerkship in which you handle documents and file petitions.

4. Field Experience

Fieldwork is an opportunity—most commonly used by students pursuing careers in science or sociology—to develop skills by observing, recording, mapping, and interpreting data. Research may be limited to one subject, like gorilla behavior or business protocol, or may encompass a number of different, limited topics.

Fieldwork is often cited as one of the best ways to put the theories that you learn in the classroom to a practical test. The best fieldwork experiences combine supervision and education (lectures, note-taking, and directed observation) with independent research practica (designing a research methodology, collecting and recording data, and drawing conclusions that result in the acceptance or rejection of an original hypothesis).

5. Service Learning

Service learning allows you to work in organized service within a community. You might work at an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher learning, or in a community service program. Service learning is usually structured as a three step process in which students outline their proposed service term and objectives, perform the service work, and then present conclusions based on an analysis of their experiences. Possible service learning projects might include working at a shelter for battered women, preserving native plants, designing a neighborhood playground, or assisting in a reading program at a local elementary school.

6. Apprenticeship

If you want to learn a highly skilled trade, and make money doing it, apprenticeships offer both practical experience and in-school training. Apprenticeships are paid and wages increase as the apprentice gains experience. Apprenticeships vary in length from one to five years. Trades offering apprenticeships include horticulture, the culinary arts, electronics technology, graphic art, clothing design, jewelry and goldsmithing, and plumbing technology.

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