

# STUDENT INTERNSHIP GUIDE

**STEP INTO YOUR FUTURE:**  
YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO INTERNSHIPS



# Truman State University - Student Internship Guide

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# Getting Started with Internships

Internships can be a vital part of your college experience, offering a way to apply what you learn in the classroom to real-world settings. They not only help you gain practical skills but also make you more marketable to future employers. This section will guide you through the basics of internships and help you start thinking about which internship might be the best fit for you.

## WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a temporary work experience where students or recent graduates can gain practical skills in their field of study. Internships are often part-time during the academic year or full-time during summer breaks. They provide an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a professional environment, allowing you to learn more about your chosen career path.

Internships can vary widely:

- **Duration:** They can last a few weeks, a semester, or even a full year.
- **Type:** Some are paid, while others are unpaid. Some may offer academic credit.
- **Format:** Internships can be remote, in-person, or hybrid.
- **Industry:** Internships exist in almost every field, including business, healthcare, technology, education, the arts, and more.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER AN INTERNSHIP?

Internships offer numerous benefits, making them an essential step in your career development:

- **Gain Real-World Experience:** Internships give you hands-on experience that complements your academic learning. You can see how theoretical concepts apply in real-world situations.
- **Build Your Resume:** Employers value candidates who have practical experience. An internship can demonstrate your ability to work in a professional setting and perform relevant tasks.
- **Expand Your Network:** Internships provide opportunities to meet professionals in your field, helping you build a network of contacts who can offer advice, mentorship, or even job opportunities.
- **Explore Different Career Paths:** Internships allow you to try out different fields or roles to see what fits you best before committing to a full-time career.
- **Improve Your Skill Set:** Beyond industry-specific skills, internships help you develop general skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are valuable in any career.

## TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS

Understanding the different types of internships can help you choose one that aligns with your goals:

### Academic Internships (For Credit)

- These internships are linked to your coursework and provide academic credit. You'll need to meet specific requirements, such as completing a learning contract or writing a final report. Academic internships may have a more structured format and involve both an employer supervisor and a faculty advisor.

### Non-Academic Internships

- These are pursued independently and typically do not offer academic credit. They are usually more flexible, allowing you to gain experience without the additional coursework. Non-academic internships may be a better fit for those seeking paid opportunities or a specific type of work experience.

### Paid vs. Unpaid Internships

- **Paid Internships:** These provide financial compensation, either through hourly wages, stipends, or other forms of payment. Paid internships are more common in fields such as engineering, finance, and technology.
- **Unpaid Internships:** These may be offered by non-profits, government agencies, or industries with fewer resources. If considering an unpaid internship, ensure it meets the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements, especially for for-profit companies.

**Length of Internship:** The duration of an internship can vary widely, and understanding these options will help you choose one that fits your schedule and career goals:

- **Summer Internships:** These typically last 8-12 weeks and take place during the summer break. They offer full-time work experience without conflicting with academic schedules. Summer internships are highly competitive, and some companies start recruiting as early as the fall semester. (MOST POPULAR)
- **Full-Time Internships:** Requiring a commitment of 35-40 hours per week, full-time internships offer a more immersive experience. They are commonly pursued during summer or through co-op programs where students take a semester off from classes.
- **Part-Time Internships:** These involve working fewer hours per week (usually 10-20) and can be pursued during the academic year or over the summer. Part-time internships provide flexibility for students balancing coursework and other commitments.
- **Micro-Internships:** These are short-term, project-based opportunities lasting from a few days to a few weeks. They are often remote and provide flexibility, making them suitable for gaining experience quickly without a long-term commitment.

### Virtual vs. In-Person Internships

- **In-Person Internships:** These take place at a physical worksite. They offer a more traditional office experience and the chance to develop face-to-face relationships.
- **Virtual Internships:** These are conducted remotely, allowing you to work from anywhere. They can be a good option if you're balancing other commitments or prefer a flexible work schedule.

# Internships: A Detailed Review

Internships are generally classified into different types based on factors such as industry, purpose, duration, and compensation. Here's a closer look at various types of internships available:

## ACADEMIC VS. NON-ACADEMIC

### Academic Credit Internships (For Credit)

Academic credit internships are designed to allow students to earn credit toward their degree while gaining practical experience. These internships are often arranged through the university and involve meeting specific academic requirements, such as completing a certain number of work hours or submitting reflective assignments and progress reports. To receive credit, students may need to enroll in an internship course supervised by a faculty advisor who monitors their progress. This type of internship allows Truman students to satisfy degree requirements while developing career-related skills and building their professional network.

It is important to note that academic internship qualifications and requirements can vary by academic program. Different departments may have specific criteria regarding eligibility, the number of credit hours available, and the nature of assignments or projects required. For detailed information on your program's requirements, please consult your program's internship coordinator or faculty advisor. They can guide you through the process and help you understand what is needed to earn credit for your internship experience.

### Co-operative Internships (Co-ops)

Co-operative internships, or co-ops, involve alternating periods of full-time academic study and full-time work. For example, a student might study for a semester and then work full-time during the next semester, repeating this cycle throughout their academic program. Co-ops are typically paid and extend over several semesters, providing significant work experience before graduation. At Truman State University, co-ops are especially common in specific fields and may include specialized experiences like clinical placements for healthcare students or student teaching for education majors. These types of co-ops help students meet professional licensing or certification requirements while gaining hands-on experience in their chosen fields.

### Non-Academic Internships

Non-academic internships are work experiences that do not count toward academic credit but still offer valuable opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in their chosen field. These internships allow students to explore career interests, build practical skills, and expand their professional network without the constraints of meeting academic requirements or deadlines. Non-academic internships can be particularly appealing to students who want to gain additional experience outside of their coursework or pursue fields where academic credit is less common, such as startups, creative industries, or freelance work. By participating in a non-academic internship, students can focus on developing industry-specific competencies and adapting to the demands of a real-world work environment. Additionally, these internships often have flexible schedules and requirements, making them an ideal option for students who need to balance other commitments, such as part-time jobs or extracurricular activities.

## PAID VS. UNPAID

### **Paid Internships**

Paid internships provide monetary compensation for the work students perform, typically through hourly wages or stipends. These internships are common in industries such as technology, finance, engineering, and marketing, where interns contribute significantly to projects and the company's operations. Paid internships not only help students cover living expenses but also motivate them to actively engage in their roles. The compensation often makes these opportunities more accessible to a broader range of students, regardless of their financial background. At Truman State University, paid internships are valued for the real-world skills and industry connections they help students develop.

### **Unpaid Internships**

Unpaid internships, while offering no monetary compensation, still provide valuable experience, networking opportunities, and sometimes academic credit. They are commonly found in sectors such as non-profits, government, the arts, and social services, where budgets may be limited. Although students do not earn money, they gain firsthand exposure to their chosen fields and often benefit from mentorship, skills development, and letters of recommendation. For many students at Truman State University, unpaid internships are a gateway to unique fields or roles that might not be available through traditional paid internships.

## TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS: DURATION & LOCATION

### **Summer Internships (most popular)**

Summer internships are typically short-term opportunities lasting 8-12 weeks during the summer break. These internships are the most popular among students because they take place when students are not attending classes, allowing them to focus solely on their work without academic distractions. Summer internships often include structured programs with training, mentoring, and project-based work, making them an excellent way for students to gain a comprehensive understanding of a field. Many companies use summer internships as a pipeline for future full-time hires, providing students with a potential pathway to employment after graduation.

### **Full-Time Internships**

Full-time internships involve working approximately 35-40 hours per week, similar to a standard job. These internships are more immersive and typically occur during the summer or immediately after graduation. Full-time internships offer in-depth exposure to the profession and often involve complex projects, team collaboration, and a higher level of responsibility. Students at Truman State University who participate in full-time internships gain a comprehensive view of what a full-time role in their field would entail, helping them develop both technical and soft skills rapidly.

### **Part-Time Internships**

Part-time internships are structured to fit around a student's class schedule, usually requiring 10-20 hours of work per week. These internships are flexible, allowing students to gain practical experience while continuing their studies. Part-time internships are ideal for students who want to gradually enhance their skills and knowledge without overextending themselves during the academic year. At Truman State University, part-time internships offer students the ability to balance their academic and professional development simultaneously.

### **Micro-Internships**

Micro-internships are short-term, project-based work experiences that typically last from a few days to a few weeks. Unlike traditional internships, they are highly flexible and allow students to engage in meaningful tasks without the commitment of a full-time or long-term internship. Micro-internships provide an opportunity to gain practical skills, build a resume, and explore different career paths in a condensed timeframe. They can be especially beneficial for students who want to gain experience between semesters, during breaks, or while balancing other commitments.

### **Virtual or Remote Internships**

Virtual or remote internships are conducted entirely online, allowing students to complete their tasks from any location. These internships have become more prevalent due to technological advancements and the growing flexibility they offer. Virtual internships can be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid, and may involve tasks such as research, marketing, or project management. At Truman State University, virtual internships are a valuable option for students who cannot relocate or have other commitments, providing flexibility and the opportunity to develop digital literacy and remote work skills.

# Self-Assessment: Determining What You Want

Before starting your internship search, it's important to assess what you hope to gain from the experience. Here are some questions to help guide your self-assessment:

**Career Goals:** What are your long-term career goals, and how can an internship help you achieve them?

**Skills Development:** Which skills do you want to develop or improve during an internship?

**Industry Interests:** What specific industries or roles are you curious about? Consider internships that will allow you to explore these areas.

**Location and Format Preferences:** Would you prefer an in-person internship, or are you open to remote or hybrid options? Does the location matter?

Reflecting on these questions will help you focus your search and choose internships that align with your goals and interests.



# Preparing to Apply for an Internship

## Writing a Resume and Cover Letter

Creating strong application materials is essential when applying for internships. A well-crafted resume and cover letter can help you stand out to employers and increase your chances of landing an interview. Here's how to craft these documents from scratch:

### RESUME WRITING TIPS

If you've never written a resume before, don't worry. The goal of your resume is to present your education, experiences, skills, and accomplishments in a way that shows employers why you would be a great intern.

#### Understanding the Basics of a Resume

A resume is a one-page document that highlights your most relevant experiences and skills. The sections of a resume typically include:

- **Contact Information:** Your name, phone number, email address, and LinkedIn profile (if applicable). Make sure your email address is professional (e.g., firstname.lastname@gmail.com).
- **Education:** List your current or most recent educational experience, including your school name, degree program, and anticipated graduation date. If your GPA is above 3.0, you may choose to include it.
- **Work Experience:** Include any part-time jobs, internships, or volunteer experiences. If you don't have formal work experience, you can skip this section or include relevant experiences like class projects or extracurricular activities.
- **Skills:** List technical skills, language abilities, or other competencies that are relevant to the internship.
- **Extracurricular Activities or Leadership (Optional):** If you're involved in clubs, sports, or other activities, include them to show leadership and teamwork skills.

#### Formatting Your Resume

- **Use a Professional Format:** Choose a simple, clean format with clearly labeled sections. Avoid overly decorative fonts or colors.
- **Font and Size:** Use a standard font like Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri in 10-12 point size for the main text. Your name and section headings can be a bit larger (14-16 point) to stand out.
- **Margins and Spacing:** Keep margins between 0.5 and 1 inch and ensure there's enough spacing between sections to make the document easy to read.

## Your Resume Sections

- **Education:** Start with your most recent educational experience. Include your school's name, location, degree program (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Psychology), and expected graduation date. If applicable, you can also list relevant coursework, study abroad experiences, or academic honors.
- **Work Experience or Relevant Experience:** Even if you haven't had a traditional job, you can list volunteer work, internships, or roles in student organizations. Use bullet points to describe your responsibilities and achievements. Start each bullet point with an action verb (e.g., "Developed," "Managed," "Organized") and quantify your accomplishments if possible (e.g., "Coordinated events for 100+ attendees").
- **Skills:** Include any skills that are relevant to the internship. These could be software programs you're familiar with (e.g., Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop), foreign languages, or other technical skills. Avoid listing vague skills like "good communicator" unless you can provide examples.

## Tailoring for Each Application

- **Focus on Relevant Experience:** Customize your resume for each internship by emphasizing the skills and experiences that match the job description. For example, if you're applying for a marketing internship, highlight any experience in social media, content creation, or analytics.
- **Use Keywords from the Job Description:** Many companies use software to screen resumes. Including relevant keywords from the job description can help your resume get noticed.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Avoid Long Paragraphs:** Use bullet points to make your resume easy to read. Employers often spend only a few seconds scanning each resume.
- **Check for Errors:** Proofread your resume to catch any spelling or grammar mistakes. It's a good idea to have someone else review it as well.
- **Keep It to One Page:** For internship applications, a one-page resume is usually sufficient.

## COVER LETTER WRITING TIPS

A cover letter is a one-page document that accompanies your resume and provides additional details about why you're a good fit for the internship.

### Understanding the Basics of a Cover Letter

A cover letter typically includes the following sections:

- **Header:** Include your contact information, the date, and the employer's contact information.
- **Greeting:** Address the letter to a specific person if possible (e.g., "Dear [Hiring Manager's Name]"). If you don't know the name, "Dear Hiring Committee" or "To Whom It May Concern" are acceptable.
- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce yourself and state the position you're applying for. Explain why you're interested in the role.
- **Body:** This section should highlight your qualifications and how they relate to the internship. Use specific examples to demonstrate your skills and experiences.
- **Closing:** Conclude with a statement expressing your enthusiasm for the opportunity and your willingness to provide further information. Thank the employer for their consideration.

### Writing an Effective Cover Letter

- **Be Concise:** Keep your cover letter to one page, with three to four paragraphs.
- **Personalize It:** Mention the company's name and details about the internship. Employers appreciate when you show that you've done your research.
- **Connect Your Skills to the Role:** Use examples from your resume to explain why you're a good fit for the position. For example, if the internship requires strong writing skills, mention a relevant class project or role where you produced written content.

### Common Mistakes to Avoid in a Cover Letter

- **Avoid Generic Openings:** Don't start with "I'm applying for this job because..." Instead, try something more engaging, such as a brief story or mention of a shared value with the company.
- **Don't Repeat Your Resume:** The cover letter should complement your resume, not restate it. Use this opportunity to explain how your experiences make you suitable for the role.
- **Proofread Carefully:** Spelling or grammar mistakes in your cover letter can create a negative impression. Double-check everything before submitting.

## TRUMAN RESUME AND COVER LETTER HANDBOOK

Before diving into your documents, take a moment to review the [Truman Resume and Cover Letter Handbook](#). This valuable resource offers step-by-step instructions, examples, and tips to help you create a strong resume that effectively showcases your skills and experiences. The guide is designed to support students at all levels, whether you're writing your first resume or updating an existing one. Once you've completed an initial draft, consider making an appointment with Truman's Career Center to receive personalized feedback on your resume and cover letter. Their team can help ensure your documents are polished and tailored for your internship applications.

### TRUMAN CAREER CENTER SUPPORT

**The Truman Career Center can critique your résumé Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm.  
Location: Kirk Building (1st Floor)**

# Finding an Internship

## RESOURCES

Finding internships involves leveraging a variety of resources, both on-campus and online. At Truman, students can start their search with [#HireTruman](#), the university's online job and internship platform, which features opportunities specifically curated for Truman students. [Truman's Career Center](#) is another valuable resource, offering guidance on resume preparation, internship search strategies, and connections with employers. Students should also consider reaching out to faculty advisors, who often have industry contacts and may know of internship opportunities related to their field of study. Additionally, attending the [Truman Career and Internship Expo](#) is a great way to meet with employers in person, learn about available internships, and make valuable professional connections, all in one place.

In addition to campus resources, several popular online platforms can help students find internships. [LinkedIn](#) is a widely used professional network where students can search for internships, connect with recruiters, and receive job alerts. [Indeed](#) and [Glassdoor](#) are also popular job boards that feature thousands of internship listings across various industries. [Parker Dewey](#) is another great platform for finding short-term project-based work (micro-internships).

Additionally, students can utilize [Missouri Intern Connect](#) to find internship opportunities specifically within Missouri, connecting them with local employers and valuable in-state experiences. Leveraging these resources allows students to greatly enhance their prospects of securing an internship that matches their goals and aspirations.

## NETWORKING

Reach out to the **Truman Career Center** for guidance on networking effectively and making a great first impression. Career Center staff can offer advice on how to approach alumni, professors, and other professionals, including tips on drafting initial messages and follow-ups. They often host workshops or individual coaching sessions focused on networking skills, professional etiquette, and preparing for informational interviews. These resources can help you refine your approach, making sure you present yourself confidently and professionally, increasing your chances of success when reaching out to potential contacts. By taking advantage of the support from the Career Center, you can feel more prepared to expand your network and discover new internship opportunities.

Connecting with alumni and professors can be an essential step in your internship search. Alumni, especially those working in industries that interest you, are often eager to help fellow students. Start by identifying alumni through your university's alumni association, LinkedIn, or the Career Center office. Reach out with a personalized message introducing yourself, explaining your academic background, and expressing your interest in learning more about their career path. Requesting an informational interview is a great way to build rapport; it's an opportunity to ask questions about their professional journey, industry trends, and advice for breaking into the field. Informational interviews can also lead to valuable referrals, mentorship, or even internship offers.

Professors can also be a valuable resource because they often have professional connections and know of internship opportunities related to their field of expertise. They may have industry contacts, know about companies that frequently hire interns, or even have projects in collaboration with companies that could lead to internship placements. Approach your professors by asking if they know of any relevant opportunities or if they can recommend potential contacts in the industry.

# Interview Preparation

Now that you've applied for an internship and secured an interview, it's time to prepare. Proper preparation can make a big difference in how you present yourself and boost your chances of success. Here's some advice to help you get ready for your internship interview, including tips on answering common questions, dressing appropriately, and preparing for virtual interviews.

## Reach Out to the Career Center for Interview Preparation

As you prepare for your internship interview, don't forget to take advantage of the resources available at the Truman Career Center. The Career Center offers personalized support for interview preparation, including the opportunity to schedule a mock interview. A mock interview is a practice interview where you can simulate the real experience, receive feedback, and refine your responses. It's one of the most effective ways to prepare, as it allows you to identify areas for improvement, gain confidence, and reduce anxiety before the actual interview.

## Practice Common Interview Questions

- **Tell Me About Yourself:** Start with a brief overview of your academic background, relevant skills, and career goals. Tailor your response to the internship, focusing on aspects of your experience that relate to the role.
- **Why Do You Want This Internship?:** Be prepared to explain why you're interested in this specific position and how it aligns with your career goals. Mention what you hope to learn and how the internship will help you develop skills in your field.
- **Why Do You Want to Intern with XYZ?:** Research the company beforehand to understand its values, mission, and recent projects. Highlight aspects that resonate with you or are relevant to your career aspirations. Explain why their internship program or company culture appeals to you specifically.
- **Describe a Challenge You Faced and How You Overcame It:** Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your response. This approach helps you explain the situation, what was required of you, the actions you took, and the outcome.
- **Tell Me About a Time When You Demonstrated Leadership or Teamwork:** Choose an example that showcases your ability to collaborate or lead others effectively. Again, use the STAR method to structure your answer, explaining the context, what your role was, the actions you took to achieve a goal or resolve an issue, and the positive results. Focus on specific skills such as communication, delegation, conflict resolution, or problem-solving.

Practice answering these and other common questions, such as those about your strengths and weaknesses, teamwork experiences, or any technical skills specific to the field. Preparing responses in advance will help you feel more confident during the interview.

## Appropriate Dress Code

- **In-Person Interviews:** Dress professionally, typically in business casual or business formal attire, depending on the company culture. For business casual, consider slacks or a skirt with a button-down shirt or blouse, and closed-toe shoes. Business formal would involve a suit and tie for men or a pantsuit or dress with a blazer for women.
- **Virtual Interviews:** Dress the same as you would for an in-person interview. Even though the interviewer may only see you from the waist up, dressing professionally from head to toe can help you get into the right mindset. Make sure your outfit is clean, neat, and free from wrinkles.

## Tips for Virtual Interviews

- **Test Your Technology:** Ensure your camera, microphone, and internet connection are working properly. Test everything before the interview to avoid technical issues.
- **Choose a Quiet, Well-Lit Location:** Find a quiet space with good lighting and a neutral background to minimize distractions. Avoid having a cluttered or busy environment behind you. For your convenience, the Career Center has interview suites you can reserve.
- **Maintain Eye Contact and Positive Body Language:** Look directly at the camera when speaking to simulate eye contact, and keep your body language open and positive. Sit up straight, smile, and nod occasionally to show engagement.
- **Keep a Copy of Your Resume Nearby:** You can reference it during the interview if needed, but avoid reading from it directly. Being prepared with notes or key points can help you stay focused.

By following these tips, you'll be well-prepared to make a great impression during your internship interview, whether it's in person or virtual. Good luck, and remember to stay calm, confident, and enthusiastic!

# Internship Expectations and Professionalism

**Congratulations on nailing your interview and securing your internship!** Now that you've landed the opportunity, it's time to make the most of your experience. Remember that an internship is not just about gaining practical skills; it's also about learning how to navigate a professional work environment and handling challenges with grace. Here are a few final words of advice to help you prepare for your internship experience, including tips on maintaining workplace etiquette and strategies for addressing common conflicts. By keeping these pointers in mind, you'll be better equipped to excel in your role and leave a lasting positive impression.

Internships offer an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a professional setting, but it's important to understand the expectations that come with this opportunity. Maintaining professionalism and navigating workplace challenges effectively will help you make a positive impression and maximize your learning experience.

## Workplace Etiquette

Professional behavior is crucial in any work environment. Following basic workplace etiquette ensures you're seen as a reliable, respectful, and valued team member.

### Communication

- **Be Clear and Concise:** When communicating with colleagues, whether in person or via email, aim to be clear and to the point. Make sure your messages are well-organized and free from spelling or grammatical errors. If you're unsure about something, don't hesitate to ask questions.
- **Follow Professional Email Etiquette:** Start emails with a proper greeting (e.g., "Dear [Name]" or "Hello [Name]") and use a professional tone. End with a polite closing (e.g., "Best regards" or "Sincerely"), followed by your name. Avoid using casual language or emojis unless you are certain it's appropriate for your workplace.
- **Respect Preferred Communication Channels:** Some workplaces may prefer emails, while others might use communication tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams. Follow the company's preferred methods for communicating with your team.

### Time Management

- **Be Punctual:** Arriving on time for work, meetings, and deadlines shows respect for others' time and demonstrates your commitment to your role. If you're running late or need to adjust a deadline, inform your supervisor as early as possible.
- **Prioritize Tasks:** Make a list of tasks and prioritize them based on urgency and importance. Break large projects into smaller, manageable steps, and keep track of deadlines to stay on top of your work.
- **Use Your Time Wisely:** While it's important to complete assigned tasks, don't forget to ask for more work or seek out additional learning opportunities if you have spare time. It shows initiative and a desire to make the most of your internship.



## Adapting to the Company's Work Environment

- **Observe Company Culture:** Take note of how your colleagues interact, dress, and conduct meetings. Try to match the professional standards of the workplace. If the environment is more formal, avoid overly casual behaviors or attire. Conversely, if it's more relaxed, adjust accordingly while still maintaining professionalism.
- **Be Open to Feedback:** Constructive criticism is an essential part of learning. Accept feedback gracefully, use it to improve, and don't be afraid to ask questions if you're unsure how to implement suggestions.
- **Build Positive Relationships:** Make an effort to get to know your colleagues and participate in team activities. Networking within the company can provide valuable insights and help you build a supportive professional network.

## Workplace Challenges

Workplace challenges are a normal part of any professional setting, and knowing how to address them effectively is an important skill. Here are strategies for managing common conflicts and challenges:

### Addressing Difficult Colleagues

- **Stay Calm and Professional:** If you encounter a difficult colleague, maintain a professional demeanor and avoid responding emotionally. Focus on resolving the issue rather than escalating it.
- **Use "I" Statements:** When discussing an issue, use "I" statements to express your feelings without placing blame (e.g., "I felt concerned when deadlines were missed because it affected our project timeline").
- **Seek a Mediator if Necessary:** If the situation doesn't improve or starts affecting your work, don't hesitate to involve a supervisor or HR representative who can mediate the conflict.

### Managing Workload Issues

- **Communicate with Your Supervisor:** If you feel overwhelmed with your tasks or struggle to meet deadlines, speak with your supervisor as soon as possible. Explain your situation and ask for advice on how to prioritize or delegate tasks.
- **Learn to Say No When Necessary:** While taking on new tasks shows initiative, be realistic about your limits. Politely decline or negotiate tasks that would overextend you and prevent you from meeting your core responsibilities.
- **Use Stress-Management Techniques:** If you're feeling stressed, take short breaks, practice mindfulness techniques, or seek support from a mentor. Balancing your mental health is key to staying productive.

### Handling Mistakes

- **Own Up to Your Mistakes:** If you make an error, take responsibility for it, and inform your supervisor right away. Explain what happened and propose a solution to fix the issue.
- **Learn from the Experience:** Mistakes are valuable learning opportunities. Reflect on what went wrong and what you can do differently in the future to avoid similar issues.

By understanding workplace etiquette and having strategies for conflict resolution, you can navigate the challenges of an internship with professionalism and grace, ultimately making the most of your experience.

# Legal and Compliance Considerations

Understanding the legal aspects and compliance requirements for internships is essential for both students and employers. This section provides an overview of labor laws regarding paid and unpaid internships, as well as important health and safety guidelines to ensure a safe and lawful internship experience.

When participating in an internship, it's important to understand your rights under labor laws, specifically the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which sets guidelines for paid and unpaid internships in the United States.

## The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Guidelines

- The FLSA establishes criteria for determining whether an internship can be unpaid or must be paid. These criteria are based on the “primary beneficiary test,” which assesses whether the intern or the employer is the primary beneficiary of the internship.
- **Paid Internships:** If the intern is considered an employee under the FLSA, they must be paid at least the federal minimum wage for all hours worked, as well as overtime pay if applicable. This is typically the case for internships where the intern performs tasks that directly benefit the employer or displaces regular employees.
- **Unpaid Internships:** Unpaid internships can be lawful if they meet the following criteria under the FLSA:
  - The internship is similar to training that would be given in an educational environment.
  - The intern understands that they will not be compensated for their work.
  - The intern does not displace regular employees and works under close supervision.
  - The internship's duration is limited to the period in which the intern receives beneficial learning.
  - The intern's work complements, rather than replaces, the work of paid employees.
  - Both the intern and the employer understand that there is no promise of a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

## Intern Rights in the Workplace

- **Right to a Safe Work Environment:** Interns are entitled to a workplace that meets health and safety standards. If you feel unsafe or encounter hazardous conditions, it's important to report them to your supervisor or human resources.
- **Protection Against Discrimination and Harassment:** Interns have the right to work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment based on race, gender, age, disability, religion, or other protected characteristics. If you experience or witness discrimination or harassment, report it according to the company's policies or seek assistance from the Career Center office.
- **Right to Fair Treatment:** Even if you are an unpaid intern, you should still be treated respectfully and given meaningful tasks that contribute to your learning and professional development.

## Health and Safety Guidelines

Health and safety are paramount when participating in an internship. Understanding workplace safety standards and any liability coverage provided by the university can help ensure a safe and successful internship experience.

### Workplace Safety Standards

- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Guidelines:** OSHA sets the standard for workplace safety and requires employers to provide a safe and healthful work environment. As an intern, you should be aware of the basic safety procedures relevant to your role, such as emergency exits, protective equipment, and proper handling of any hazardous materials.
- **Reporting Safety Concerns:** If you observe unsafe practices or conditions in the workplace, report them to your supervisor immediately. All employees, including interns, have the right to report safety violations without fear of retaliation.

### University Liability Coverage

- **Understanding Coverage:** Many universities offer some form of liability coverage for students participating in credit-bearing internships. This coverage may provide protection in case of accidents or incidents that occur during the course of the internship. Be sure to check with the Career Center or risk management office to understand what coverage is in place.
- **Internship Agreements and Waivers:** Some internships may require students to sign agreements or waivers regarding liability. Make sure you understand the terms and conditions before signing any documents. If you have questions, consult your academic advisor or the Career Center for guidance.

### Health Guidelines

- **Maintaining Your Well-Being:** Remember that your health comes first. If you're feeling unwell or overwhelmed, communicate with your supervisor and seek appropriate support from healthcare services if needed.

# International Students

For international students, internships offer a valuable opportunity to gain practical experience in your field of study while studying abroad. However, there are specific guidelines and requirements that you need to keep in mind to ensure compliance with immigration laws and university policies. This section outlines key considerations for international students when planning and participating in internships.

## Understanding Work Authorization Requirements

Before starting any internship in the U.S., international students must ensure they have the appropriate work authorization. The requirements can vary depending on your visa status, with the most common being the F-1 visa. Here's what you need to know:

### Curricular Practical Training (CPT):

- **Overview:** CPT is a type of work authorization for F-1 visa holders that allows you to engage in internships that are an integral part of your curriculum or academic program. It can be used for part-time or full-time internships but must be approved by your designated school official (DSO).
- **Eligibility:** You must be enrolled full-time for at least one academic year to be eligible for CPT, and the internship must be directly related to your major. Some exceptions exist for graduate students.
- **Approval Process:** Obtain written authorization from your DSO before starting your internship. The authorization will be noted on your Form I-20. Be sure to apply for CPT well in advance of your internship start date.

### Optional Practical Training (OPT):

- **Overview:** OPT allows F-1 students to work in their field of study for up to 12 months, either during or after completing their degree. Certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) majors may qualify for a 24-month extension.
- **Eligibility:** You can apply for OPT after completing at least one academic year of full-time study. OPT can be used for part-time internships while still enrolled in classes or full-time after graduation.
- **Application Process:** Unlike CPT, OPT requires an application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), including a fee and a waiting period of approximately 3-5 months for approval.

## Internship Eligibility and Academic Requirements

International students need to be aware of additional academic considerations when planning an internship:

- **Credit-Bearing Internships:** If your internship is being used to fulfill academic credit requirements, make sure it meets your university's criteria for an internship course. This may involve enrolling in a special internship course and completing assignments or evaluations.
- **Limitations on Hours Worked:** While on CPT, F-1 students can engage in part-time internships (up to 20 hours per week) during the academic semester and full-time internships (more than 20 hours per week) during breaks. Make sure you stay within these limits to maintain your immigration status.

## Documentation and Compliance

Staying compliant with immigration regulations is crucial for international students. Here are some tips to help you maintain the necessary documentation:

- **Keep Copies of Important Documents:** Always keep copies of your Form I-20, CPT/OPT approval, and any internship offer letters. You may need to show these documents if requested by your employer or immigration officials.
- **Report Employment Changes:** Notify your DSO of any changes to your internship, including changes in work hours, employer, or location. Staying up-to-date with your DSO ensures your records are current and compliant with visa requirements.
- **Travel Considerations:** If you plan to travel outside the U.S. during your internship, consult with your DSO to ensure you have the necessary documents for re-entry, including a valid passport, visa, and Form I-20 signed for travel.

## Additional Considerations for International Students

International students may face unique challenges during internships. Here are some tips to help you navigate these situations:

- **Cultural Adjustment:** Understand that workplace culture in the U.S. may differ from your home country. Be open to feedback and observe workplace norms regarding communication, punctuality, and teamwork. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you are unsure about something.
- **Language Barriers:** If English is not your first language, practice your communication skills, especially for professional settings. Utilize language support services offered by your university, such as writing centers or conversational language workshops.
- **Career Center Support:** International students can benefit from the Career Center's resources, including help with resume writing and interview preparation. Make an appointment with a career advisor to get personalized guidance on navigating internships as an international student.

## Consult Center for International Students

When pursuing an internship as an international student, it is essential to understand that laws and regulations vary based on your specific visa type. The requirements for F-1, J-1, and other visa categories can differ significantly, especially concerning work authorization, hours allowed, and documentation. It's important to stay informed about the rules that apply to your particular situation.

[The Center for International Students](#) is a valuable resource to help you navigate the complexities of working in the U.S. as an international student. Always consult with them before making decisions regarding internships to ensure that you remain in compliance with immigration laws.

Center for International Students - Baldwin Hall 104 - Email: [iso01@truman.edu](mailto:iso01@truman.edu)

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Can you get academic credit for a paid internship?**

Yes, you can receive academic credit for a paid internship at Truman, as long as the internship meets the requirements set by your academic department. To earn credit, you may need to enroll in an internship course, complete a specified number of work hours, and submit assignments or progress reports.

Approval from a faculty advisor or internship coordinator is usually required to ensure the internship aligns with your academic goals.

## **How do I find an internship that matches my major or career interests?**

Start by consulting Truman State University's Career Center, which can help connect you with internship opportunities that align with your field of study. Additionally, many academic departments have faculty advisors or coordinators who can recommend internship options. You can also search for internships on reputable job boards, attend career fairs, and reach out to companies directly to inquire about opportunities.

## **Do all internships offer monetary compensation?**

No, internships can be paid or unpaid. Paid internships are common in industries like technology, finance, and marketing, while unpaid internships are more typical in non-profits, arts, and government sectors. Some internships may offer academic credit or other forms of compensation, such as stipends, travel reimbursements, or professional development opportunities.

## **What are the benefits of doing a part-time internship during the school year?**

A part-time internship allows you to gain practical experience while continuing your studies, helping you build a strong resume before graduation. It provides an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in a professional setting without overcommitting to a full-time role. Part-time internships also offer flexibility, as they typically require fewer hours per week, allowing you to balance work, academics, and life.

## **Can I complete multiple internships while studying at Truman?**

Yes, you can complete multiple internships during your time at Truman. In fact, having diverse internship experiences can be advantageous, as it allows you to explore different career paths, develop a broader skill set, and expand your professional network. Be sure to manage your time effectively to balance internships with academic responsibilities.

## **Do I need prior experience to get an internship?**

Not necessarily. Many internships are designed to provide entry-level experience and do not require previous work experience. However, having relevant coursework, volunteer activities, or projects can make you a more competitive candidate. Some internships, especially in highly specialized fields, may require specific skills or experience.

## **Can I complete an internship if I'm planning to go to grad school?**

Absolutely. Completing an internship before graduate school can be a valuable experience that enhances your academic and career prospects. Internships provide practical, hands-on skills that can complement your graduate studies and make you a more competitive candidate for future job opportunities.