



Unpaid Internships

There are many different types of opportunities for students and new graduates to gain experience. Generally, if you perform work for a person, company or organization and are not in business for yourself, then you would be considered to be a paid employee under the Employment Standards Act (ESA). There are some very limited exceptions where an unpaid internship is permitted.

The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) recommends that an unpaid internship be considered legitimate if the following criteria are met:

1. The training is similar to field-specific or applied training that can be found at a post-secondary institution.
2. The training is for the benefit of the intern.
3. The organization providing the training derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the intern while he or she is being trained.
4. The intern does not displace employees of the organization providing the training.
5. The intern is not accorded a right to become an employee of the organization providing the training.
6. The intern is advised that he or she will receive no remuneration for the time that he or she spends in training.
7. The skills and/or experience gained must be transferable to other employment settings.
8. There are clearly defined and articulated learning outcomes for the intern to realize by the conclusion of the internship.
9. Regular supervision is given by a professional pertinent to the internship.
10. Internships must be for a defined period of time.

Did you know?

There is another “unpaid internship” exception, which applies to approved University programs and courses (e.g. internship, co-op, practicum, field placement, service learning). This exception exists to encourage employers/ organizations to provide students enrolled in post-secondary education with experiential learning to complement their academics.

Applying & Interviewing

When you are applying for an opportunity, you should always research the organization. This will help you to customize your application materials to suit the organization and the opportunity. It will also give you a chance to begin determining if the role and the organization are a good fit for you. Some areas to consider are:

- ✓ Have you done your research? Does the organization and internship provide you with valuable work experience? Is the opportunity a good fit for you? Does the organization have a good reputation?
- ✓ Does the opportunity complement your learning in a course or program? Is the opportunity recognized by the University? Will you receive academic credit?
- ✓ Have you prepared and customized your documents for the specific opportunity (i.e. resume, CV, cover letter, samples of work, etc.)? Have you highlighted your skills and experience as they relate to the requirements in the job posting and the mission/vision/values of the organization?
- ✓ Are there additional opportunities for internal or external training, development and/or mentorship?
- ✓ How will you manage the financial implications if the position is unpaid?
- ✓ How long will it take you to travel to work daily? Will you drive or take transit?

Important

Sometimes an employer may ask for personal information such as marital or family status. If it is not relevant to the job, you are not required to provide this type of information. Questions about your race/ethnicity, citizenship, age, and other very personal topics are not appropriate in an employment interview and may even be considered violations of the Ontario Human Rights Code. For more information, visit <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-employment-related-medical-information/employment-applications>

Interview questions that address your suitability for a role will ask you for...

Description of your relevant experience, including school projects, volunteer work, and employment

Identification of your knowledge, skills and attributes relevant to the role

Interview questions that address your fit for an organization will ask for...

Explanation of your understanding of an organization's processes, reputation, and history

Description of examples of your behaviour that demonstrate your attitudes and work habits

Accepting the Offer

Great, you got the offer! There are a number of items to take care of before you start working, to ensure that your expectations and the employer's expectations are both met. You'll want to ensure the following things are documented in your offer package or during the hiring process:

- ✓ Job description outlining responsibilities, tasks and/or projects
 - ✓ What is the duration of the position, hours of work and days of the week?
 - ✓ Will the opportunity be part of a recognized internship/practicum/field placement/service learning program or course with the University? If so, how will academic credit be documented/assigned?
 - ✓ How will your performance be measured and documented? Who will your supervisor be?
 - ✓ What are the learning outcomes for this opportunity?
 - ✓ Will you receive any pay in this position (e.g. wages, stipends, honorariums)?
 - ✓ Will you receive any benefits coverage or perks as part of this opportunity (e.g. health and dental benefits, tuition reimbursement, internal/external training, discounts for merchandise, etc.)?
 - ✓ Are you covered by the organization/employer WSIB policy or the University's insurance policy?
 - ✓ Do you need to pay for parking or public transit and if so, what is the cost?
 - ✓ Is there a dress code or expectations around professional appearance? Do you need to wear a uniform and/or personal protective equipment for the role (e.g. safety glasses)?
- Generally, the organization should cover the cost of uniforms and personal protective equipment.

Your Bank Account & Your Identity

If an employer asks you to use your own money to purchase materials for sale or redistribution on the promise that they will transfer money to you at a later date, this opportunity may be fraudulent. You should never be asked to cash a cheque in your personal bank account on behalf of an employer and should also never be asked to disclose your personal banking password.

You should not be asked to provide your passport, driver's license, or similar identity information unless this identification is required for the position (i.e. positions that require driving may ask for a valid driver's license). If you are an international student, you may be asked to show your valid work permit. We suggest you politely decline to provide information that an employer does not need in order to protect your identity. If you think your identity has been stolen call the Canadian Anti - Fraud Centre at 1888-495-8501.

Be prepared, do your research and trust your instincts! If you have concerns, check them out! <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-avoid-or-recover-identity-theft>

More Information

For more details regarding unpaid internships, please visit www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/internships.php. If you are unsure whether an unpaid internship opportunity is excluded from the ESA, please call the Employment Standards Information Centre toll-free at 1-800-531-5551 for further information.

Please note:

While every effort is made to avoid errors, requirements do change. This tip sheet is intended as an informational document only. Please refer to the "More Information" section of this document for contacts to access the most up-to-date information.!