

Everything You Need to Know about Internships

(updated July 1, 2025)

Gaining industry experience is one of the best ways to prepare for full-time employment after graduation. Many employers look for candidates who have already worked in environments similar to the roles they're hiring for. If you're still in school or new to a particular field, internships can support your professional growth and help you decide if a certain career path is right for you.

Have questions? Reach out to your Career Coach, Academic Advisor, or WKU faculty for guidance!

What Is an Internship?

An internship is a short-term, hands-on work experience designed to help you explore a specific industry or job function. It's both a learning opportunity and a chance to contribute. Ideally, interns take on meaningful projects, build skills, connect with professionals, and learn what it's really like to work in that field.

Internships can be paid or unpaid, and in-person, hybrid, or remote.

Why Are Internships Important?

Internships let you work directly with professionals, giving you insight into day-to-day roles in your chosen field. They also help you:

- Build your professional network
- Strengthen your resume
- Gain confidence and clarity about your career path
- Possibly secure a full-time job offer after graduation

In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), employers consistently rank internship experience as one of the most important factors in their hiring decisions.

Are Internships Required for All Majors at WKU?

No, not all majors require internships as part of the program requirement - but they are still highly encouraged for all majors.

- If your major *does* require an internship:
You'll need to go through the appropriate department to ensure all requirements (e.g., placement, course credit, grading) are met.
- If your major *does not* require one:
You can still pursue an internship independently. These opportunities can still provide valuable experience for your resume, even without earning academic credit.

Always consult your professors and academic advisor to understand your specific program's expectations.

Tips for Securing an Internship

1. **Start with self-assessment**

Understand your skills, interests, and goals. This will help guide your search and prepare you for interviews.

2. **Narrow your focus**

Ask yourself:

- What industry interests me?
- Where do I want to work (geographically)?
- What skills do I want to gain?
- When is the best time for me to intern?

3. **Prepare your application materials**

Visit the Career Studio or a Career Coach for help with your resume, cover letter, and interview skills. Be sure to tailor each application to the specific internship.

4. **Start early**

Begin your search at least one semester in advance of your desired start date. Some industries recruit even earlier.

5. **Attend WKU career events**

Participate in career fairs, employer spotlights, and information sessions. These often lead directly to internship opportunities. Check Handshake for updates about events taking place at WKU.

6. **Network, network, network!**

Ask professors, classmates, family, friends - and their networks - if they know of internship openings. The more people you ask, the more leads you'll find.

7. **Use multiple search strategies**

Online job boards (like Handshake, Indeed) are helpful, but combine them with networking and industry-specific resources for better results. Diversifying your strategies dramatically increases your odds of securing an internship.

8. **Keep the momentum going**

Don't stop applying after submitting a few applications. Continue your search until you've officially secured an offer.

9. **Update your resume after your internship**

Add the experience to your resume while it's fresh in your mind - include accomplishments, skills gained, and project outcomes.

10. **Stay in touch with internship contacts**

Your former supervisors and coworkers can be great resources for future job searches, references, and professional advice.

General Helpful Hints

- The earlier you begin looking, the MORE opportunities you will uncover. It is recommended that you start seeking internships 3-5 months in advance of the potential start date.
- Use a variety of search strategies to seek internships. If you only look at online job portals, you are dramatically limiting your potential opportunities.
- Be sure to keep in touch with your mentor and/or professional contacts that you made during your internship. These people can be valuable contacts and resources for you to use in the future for career advice, or even when you begin looking for a job.

Final Thoughts

Internships offer a low-risk way to explore a potential career path while gaining valuable hands-on experience. They not only strengthen your resume but also give you a competitive advantage when applying for jobs or graduate school. The process of finding an internship is similar to a job search, making it great practice before graduation. Plus, you'll start building a network of professional contacts - connections that can be incredibly helpful when it's time to launch your full-time career.

For additional advice on internship search strategies, speak with a Career Coach. You can make appointments [online](#) or in person (Downing Student Union 2001 or 2141, Advising and Career Development Center).