

WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

- INSPIRING

GUIDE TO INTERNSHIPS FOR SMEs



What is an internship?

An internship is a paid period of work experience with an organisation which lasts for a fixed period of time and could be anything from a week to 12 months.

For the Intern, an internship is an opportunity to gain meaningful experience that will enhance their employability skills and enable them to develop further workplace skills. For any employer, internships provide a cost-effective and low-risk opportunity to recruit students and graduates.

Benefits to the employer include:

- Gaining a new and motivated member of the team
- New skills and perspectives brought into the business
- Increased productivity
- Opportunity for Internal staff development – leadership / mentoring skills

Most internships take place over the summer months and last between 8-10 weeks, but individual universities are developing intern programmes that have more flexibility and can be completed on a part-time basis in term time. Most universities will release details in early spring (around March) and will provide details of their application process.

To pay or not to pay?

Paying interns for the work that they do in your business or organisation is not just the right thing to do but it also allows internships to become accessible to a wider group of students or graduates. Receiving a wage will increase the loyalty and motivation of the intern resulting in increased productivity.

If someone is expected to contribute to your company, has a list of duties and is working set hours, they are classed as a 'worker' and should be entitled to be paid the National Minimum / Living wage (dependent on their age).

Financial support

Many Universities will operate Internship schemes each year that offer full or part funding to cover the cost of the intern's wages for the time that they are with the business. Some of these schemes are national schemes such as the Santander SME Internship Scheme but increasingly universities are also offering their own schemes that are funded independently by the university. It is important to note that in most cases, as the employer, you will be required to add the Intern to your payroll in the same way as for any other staff member and make the relevant 'right to work' checks.

Recruiting an intern

The recruitment of an intern should mirror the recruitment process for a regular employee. One of the purposes of an internship opportunity is professional development and the recruitment stage is where this begins.

What should the internship look like / include?

A successful internship opportunity should:

- Provide a safe working environment for the intern
- Provide a clear induction process that introduces the intern into the business
- Provide a clear outline of the project or work the intern is expected to complete
- Support the intern to develop employability skills
- Support the intern to develop skills, knowledge and build confidence
- Provide comprehensive feedback at the end of the placement

How can we help?

Business West can provide impartial workforce development planning, which will help you design your workforce for the future and plan internships as part of your business strategy. To find out more contact our expert team today.



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