



## **Quality Internship - Self-Assessments**

### **The Basics of Quality Internships**

This document captures the key qualities of a sound career development internship program. It serves as a guideline for those initiating career development internship programs, as well as a resource for existing programs looking to examine their current programming.

This document also includes an assessment of authentic work. Authentic work is integral to an excellent internship, and is essential to the functioning of the organization. Authentic work provides interns with the opportunity to feel as though they are making a difference and fosters a sense of pride in their contribution. Concluding this document are example workplace and career-related skills and scenarios. This document also highlights the different components of internship programming and illustrates the interrelationship between components that creates a high quality career development internship program.

## **WHAT IS A QUALITY CAREER DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP?**

A career development internship is a structured real-life work experience in an actual work environment. Interns are treated as young employees who are distinguished from the rest of the staff, with a structured introduction to the workplace and its accompanying professional expectations, skills, and etiquette.

They have the additional benefit of working alongside a caring adult mentor who helps them initiate their career journey on sure footing. Interns are paid, given school credit, or otherwise compensated in recognition of their contribution to the organization.

A strong internship has clear learning objectives, continual adult supervision and a work plan. It is created by interns and mentors, outlining a designated series of challenging work and/or projects integral to the organization.

The internship is based on youth development principles, and staff is knowledgeable about characteristics of adolescent developmental stages and positive youth development.

The internship also provides a broad understanding of the organization and related occupational areas.

It designates time and shares methods to reflect, allowing interns to think deeply and internalize their realizations and learning in order to enrich their experience.

An essential component of a solid internship is a carefully planned and embedded evaluation based on sound methods of gathering data, analyzing and interpreting results, and using findings to refine the program.

A successful internship program requires careful and thoughtful planning, and a program coordinator who provides ongoing contact and support to both the mentor and interns.

## Quality Internships Self- Assessment

You can use this self-assessment to discover your program’s strengths and/or identify areas for initiating or improvement.

*My program:*

	Contains a carefully articulated comprehensive set of experiences based on youth development principles, an understanding of adolescent developmental stages, and key components necessary for career development
	Is based on positive youth development: interns are seen, treated, and recognized as assets. It provides interns opportunities to shape their own learning and uses their existing skills to benefit the organization
	Encourages interns to develop and improve skills in goal and time management, group and individual work, communication, leadership, as well as self-direction
	Includes an evaluation measuring program success in relationship to goals and outcomes. This becomes the basis for changes and/or the development of new opportunities
	Successfully communicates expectations, offers support to anyone struggling to meet them, and effectively executes pre-understood ultimate consequences
	Offers thorough recruitment and training of mentors who work one-on-one with interns. Mentor training includes an overview of expectations and specifically addresses the role of a mentor: how adults should can work positively with young people and ways to create and assign authentic work.
	Recruits caring and attentive mentors who nurture a trusting two-way relationship, provide an inside-view into their daily work life and the environment around them, and help their intern set personal and career- goals
	Assigns authentic work of true value to the organization. Work that is planned, comprehensive, teaches entry and higher-level work skills, employs problem solving, and

	requires critical thinking. At the beginning of the program the mentor-intern team, with program coordinator support, outlines a flexible but detailed plan that describes specific work for each point throughout the program. The detailed plan consists of related tasks and/or projects that have minimal administrative or repetitive tasks, includes set deadlines, and presents a concrete description of what success looks like
	Creates a physical environment where young people feel welcome as a part of the organization and/or department
	Teaches and requires appropriate behavior to succeed in the workplace, and has pre-determined consequences for poor behavior
	Designates times for oral and written reflection so interns internalize their learning and realizations about their experiences and relate them to their career plans
	Encourages and offers time for questions
	Cultivates intern's sense of ownership and pride in their work
	Illustrates a micro and macro perspective of the organization, and the intern's place within it
	Has regular, planned meetings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and reflect on progress of work, and identify next steps</li> <li>• Provide positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Help interns improve work, if applicable</li> <li>• Identify possible additional experiences that broaden the intern's understanding of careers and the work world</li> <li>• Review the intern's goals for the internship and her or his future</li> </ul>
	Encourages professional staff in different fields to share their personal career journeys, details about their daily work, how they made and currently make decisions, and ways they handle challenges and strategies to meet them
	Offers career development workshops (such as workplace readiness, college selection and application, resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, job searches, etc.)

	Provides closure through joint review of what was learned and accomplished both in general and in relationship to the team's predetermined goals
	Celebrates and expresses appreciation for the intern's contribution
	Offers continued support, connection, and opportunities for contribution to the program/organization in the future
	Offers guidance in initiating a career journey action plan and the formation intention of a professional career network

## What Does Authentic Work Look Like?

The following is a checklist of quality professional work for youth that helps prepare them for future success.

*My program:*

	Sets clear goals, expectations, and includes a specific description of what evidence of meeting these goals would look like. These are all articulated and understood upfront
	Assigns authentic work which is challenging, improves critical thinking, introduces new skills, is useful to the organization, and has a minimal amount of menial/repetitive tasks and experiences that includes and builds off the intern's skills.
	Assigns work that has a recognizable beginning, middle, and end that logically builds
	Affords opportunities to work in a team in addition to independent work
	Provides opportunities to take on leadership roles and demonstrate initiative
	Schedules designated times for intern self-assessment as well as mentor feedback on intern's progress
	Gives praise for what is well done, and offers supportive corrections for improvement, if applicable
	Builds a sense of pride in self, establishes ownership of the work, and recognizes its value to the organization

## Workplace and Career-Related Skills

<i>Initiative and Self Direction</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Scenarios</i>
Manage Goals and Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals with concrete success criteria</li> <li>• Balance short-term and strategic long-term goals</li> <li>• Utilize time and manage workload efficiently</li> </ul>	<p>A mentor assigns her intern a rather long data processing project that requires a number of steps and tasks and has a time-sensitive due date. In addition to describing what the finished project should look like, the mentor explains the reason for the work and its relevance to the organization. The intern double checks with her mentor that he understands exactly what to do. The intern manages his time effectively and completes the work successfully, and on time.</p>
Work Independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight</li> </ul>	<p>Using the above scenario, the intern asks his mentor any necessary questions for clarity, and then afterwards, feeling well prepared, successfully completes the project on his own.</p>
Be Self-directed Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise</li> <li>• Demonstrate initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level</li> <li>• Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong</li> </ul>	<p>A mentor trains her intern on the basics of a software program. After becoming familiar with the program, the intern explores what else the software can do. The intern discovers there might be a better way to use the program and explains it to her mentor, who agrees and says she should put her suggestion into action.</p> <p>Later, writing in her journal, the intern uses the provided 3-part reflection sentence starter in the following manner:</p> <p><u>What I realize about my work today...</u>"is</p>

	<p>process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress</li> </ul>	<p>that I'm really glad I discovered what else the software could do"</p> <p><u>Because...</u>"it felt great when my mentor said that my method helped me complete the job faster than she expected."</p> <p><u>In the future...</u>"whenever my mentor teaches me something new I'll see if it can be incorporated, so the work is better."</p>
Interact Effectively with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak</li> <li>• Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner</li> </ul>	<p>A mentor is giving her intern constructive feedback on how to improve his work. The intern listens carefully, doesn't interrupt, and repeats back his understanding of what she said, before calmly responding. At the end of the conversation, the mentor compliments her intern for handling the situation in a professional and mature manner.</p>
Work Effectively in Diverse Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect differences and work effectively with people from a range of social, cultural and professional backgrounds</li> <li>• Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values</li> <li>• Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work</li> <li>• Identify roles in a team and</li> </ul>	<p>In a workshop on teamwork and the roles people play in a team, small groups of interns are assigned different scenarios. Each group presents its scene a number of times so that everyone can rotate through the different roles (leader, note taker, negotiator, planner, etc.) Afterward, each intern identifies the skills she or he thinks are necessary for each role, assesses those she or he did well, and notes what to work for improvement</p>



	<p>identify how to best use their skills to help the team meet its objectives</p>	
Manage Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressure</li> <li>• Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result</li> </ul>	<p>The intern successfully uses a daily planner for the week that details what he needs to do each day in order to handle family responsibilities, school work, college prep, school play rehearsals, and dates with friends.</p>
Produce Results	<p>Demonstrate additional attributes associated with producing high-quality products including the abilities to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work positively and ethically</li> <li>2. Multi-task</li> <li>3. Participate actively, as well as be reliable and punctual</li> <li>4. Be accountable for results</li> </ol>	<p>On a final evaluation a mentor wrote that his intern was always eager to do anything, asked questions, and did his work correctly and on time. The mentor also made special note that one day when she was out, her intern, after completing the work he had left for her, decided to ask other staff if she could be of help for the rest of the day.</p>
Guide and Lead Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal</li> <li>• Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal</li> <li>• Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness</li> <li>• Demonstrate integrity and</li> </ul>	<p>When working with her group on the final presentation, the intern takes a moment to think about the other members' particular skills and different personalities. She incorporates her thoughts into her suggestions for how everyone might participate in the planning process, and then respects responses to her ideas.</p>

	ethical behavior in using influence and power	
Be Responsible to Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind</li> </ul>	<p>During a three-month group project, an intern unexpectedly has to miss the next meeting. Despite her packed schedule, she doesn't want to hold up the group. She forgoes her friend's weekend party, and instead completes the work she is responsible for. She submits it to the team leader before leaving town</p>