

Internship FAQ's

1. Why hire a RISD intern?

Through ArtWorks, employers gain access to a pool of talented and hard working students and alumni from one of the most outstanding art and design schools in the world. RISD interns bring creativity and new technologies to their jobs while gaining hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of their intended career path. Hiring RISD students as interns allows employers to foster a stronger connection to RISD, while identifying individuals who might be a good fit for your company or organization in the future.

2. What is an internship?

Internships are typically one-time work or service experiences related to a student's major or career goal. The internship generally involves a student working in a professional setting under the supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals. Internships can be paid or unpaid, full time or part time, and the student may or may not receive academic credit for performing the internship. Students can, and often do, receive both credit and payment (or other forms of compensation) for their time. An intern should not replace regular freelance or permanent employees.

RISD strongly encourages students to pursue internships, and believes that these opportunities should provide students with substantive and relevant work experience in a professional setting.

3. RISD approved internships – criteria

Internships for RISD students are educationally-based, career-related work experiences that give students an opportunity to work alongside established professionals in the student's area of interest. Students work under a designated supervisor, someone with skills and abilities at a higher level than that of the student; who has the ability to act as a mentor to assist the student in learning new skills and techniques.

Please note that social media jobs such as website re-design, or development/maintenance of a company's Facebook page are not considered valid internships by RISD standards. We would be happy, however, to assist you in posting these types of opportunities as paid, freelance jobs.

4. Credit-bearing internships:

Internships may be eligible for academic credit, when approved by the student's academic department, and RISD expects sponsors of internships for credit to provide career-related experiences that are of sufficient challenge to college-level students. Enrollment in an internship for credit requires approval of the student's Internship Advisor, Department Head and Division Dean, who will verify the experience for professional appropriateness.

5. Paid vs. unpaid?

Taking a non-paid internship may constitute an economic hardship for some students, and thereby may limit the pool of qualified candidates you receive. The College therefore encourages internship sponsors to pay their interns at minimum wage or above. If you cannot pay an hourly wage for a RISD intern, you might consider offering some other form of compensation such as a stipend to cover daily meals or travel costs, or provide credit tuition reimbursement for internship credits, especially for a full time internship. Receipt of academic credit in addition to wages (or other compensation) for an internship does not represent a conflict of interest for employers.

Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act:

<http://www.nacua.org/documents/InternshipProgramsUnderFLSA.pdf>

6. Academic calendar, student availability and hourly requirements:

Internships for RISD students typically last from 6 weeks (Wintersession) to 3 or 4 months (summer or semester). RISD students are most available to participate in an internship during the summer (June, July and August) and during Wintersession (6 weeks in January and February), though they are permitted to work as part-time interns during fall and spring semesters if their class schedule allows. While we encourage you to post an internship for any time of the year, a familiarity with RISD's unique academic calendar will help you find a student who is available for the work you have in mind.

Credit bearing Internships that are approved by the student's department are taken for 3 credits and a minimum of 100 hours total. Summer internships for credit are restricted to undergraduate students after sophomore year and graduate students after their first year. Summer internships require a minimum of six weeks involvement and a minimum of 100 hours total.

7. General Guidelines:

To ensure that an experience—whether it is a traditional internship or one conducted remotely or virtually—is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship, the following criteria must be met:

- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- Learning objectives are clearly identified and are related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework or interests.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the student's field of interest.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives and goals.
- The experience must be a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- Don't suggest a job may be waiting at the end of the internship.

8. Definitions:

Paid Internships: These are internships that meet state requirements for minimum wage. Generally, for paid internships, gaining academic credit is optional. Recent graduates, as well as students, are often hired as paid interns.

Unpaid Internships: Under federal law, if a student is interning at a for-profit company and is unpaid, they will be required to receive academic credit for the experience. Credit is determined appropriate and granted solely by the student's academic institution, and is determined based on the educational merits of the experience. Compensation bearing internships (below) are considered unpaid internships.

Compensation Bearing Internships: These internships typically offer stipends for travel or meals, Metro cards for transportation or a daily pay rate. These are not paid internships and do not offer any of the benefits or rights for interns in the workplace. If an internship is in the for-profit sector, these internships will typically require students to be registered for academic credit (like unpaid internships) under Federal Labor Laws.

9. Posting guidelines

When posting an internship to ArtWorks, employers should provide a complete internship description that is similar to a job description, including the professional nature of the work expected, and the willingness of the employer to provide supervision and mentorship.

All internships posted on ArtWorks will be vetted by career center staff for academic integrity, curriculum fit and program guidelines. The Career Center plays no role in screening or selecting interns, which is the sole responsibility of the company or organization

10. Tips and advice to make the most of your internship program

- List clear internship start and end dates.
- Use the same hiring process as for regular staff, i.e. resume review & interview(s).
- Make your expectations clear and be sure that you and your intern are on the same page. Agree, verbally and in writing, from the start, on expectations and goals, and communicate with your intern your expectations for communication and processing of tasks.
- No more than 20% of an intern's day should be spent on repetitive, mundane tasks. Develop a detailed, well thought-out job description and list of potential intern projects. Give students real work and remember to balance out routine tasks with more interesting projects. An intern can help you get the job done that you couldn't otherwise, so it makes sense to utilize your intern well.
- Create a thorough orientation and training to the position, the department and your organization.
- Make sure that the intern has a mentor or supervisor to provide guidance. If it is someone who truly likes to teach, all the better. Make sure the intern's supervisor can check in with and spend the necessary time with the intern, as an intern may not speak up if they're feeling ignored or having difficulty understanding things.
- Be prepared to offer feedback (positive or constructive) frequently. Have a mid-point and/or end-point evaluation meeting; provide written form and/or letter of recommendation if deserved.
- Help your intern feel connected. Is there a staff meeting that they can attend? Can they come along to that next project meeting? Headed to lunch with a few people from the organization/office/studio? Please include them in the daily life of your workplace. The more perspective you can provide in your intern's work, the better their performance will be.
- Be prepared: Make sure other employees know the intern is coming and that there is a place for them to work. It is amazing how many employers hire an intern and don't think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, space, phone or computer to do the tasks assigned. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools they need to do the job.
- Remember that interns have living expenses. If your organization is unable to offer an hourly rate maybe you can offer to pay for their transportation, take them to lunch or develop some other creative ways to assist them.
- Please be considerate of your intern's intellectual property rights. We discourage the commercial use of students' artwork without the transfer of rights and remuneration.

11. Links/Resources:

- RISD registrar's office information for employers; summer internship reqs and special requirements for Arch.
- NACE: [15 Best Practices for Internship Programs](#)□
- How to Hire an Intern: from *Entrepreneur Magazine* <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/205500>
- Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act
<http://www.nacua.org/documents/InternshipProgramsUnderFLSA.pdf>
- Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program, compiled and edited by Michael True:
<https://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gsph/fieldpractice/sites/starting-maintaining-quality-internship-program.pdf>