

Intern Guide

Getting the most out of your internship

A guide for Warwick Graduate Interns

January 2018

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Guide to the Warwick Graduate Internship programme

How to use this guide

This guide will provide you with the key information you need to get the most from your internship experience. It will help you prepare for the internship and your role as an intern by identifying the key actions you should be taking at each stage.

Additional resources are available on the [Mahara Warwick Graduate Internships Programme](#), in particular [Section 5 Internships - before, during and after](#). You should familiarise yourself fully with these resources.

Contact information

Warwick Internships Development Team

Email: placementlearning@warwick.ac.uk

Phone: 02476 151882

Online Mahara WGI resources: <http://myportfolio.warwick.ac.uk/view/view.php?id=121774>

The intern's perspective - what do WGI interns gain from this internship experience?

Being a WGI intern will provide you with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. At the end of the internship you will be much better placed to find a graduate role. Previous WGI interns have told us that they learnt so much about themselves as a result of their internship experience, becoming more confident and self-assured when they realised that they had strengths and skills which they were not previously aware of. Here are some of our previous WGI interns' thoughts on what they took from their internship:

"I learnt so many new skills that I was not expecting at all. I didn't think I would be doing as much as I did and I'm grateful for that. Working in a start-up really pushes you to learn a lot of new skills quickly. I am now confident to speak to clients ranging from other start-ups to big corporates. I was so shy, I couldn't network, was scared to talk to anyone with authority and now I can network without a worry, I can speak to clients, I know how to send professional emails and act in a professional setting. My management skills have greatly improved. I had to do multiple tasks and oversee multiple different projects; prioritising each task. Honestly, I was thrown in the deep end, pushed out of my comfort zone, but it paid off greatly" *WGI Intern 2016/17*

"I found the experience beneficial in terms of personal development because it helped me to identify my strengths and weaknesses. The experience also provided me with concrete examples of certain competencies that are often asked of in job applications. For example, I had many chances to work in a team and can now provide good examples of when I have been able to do so in a more professional setting" *WGI Intern 2016/17*

The employer perspective - what do WGI employers say about interns?

What makes a good intern?

Learn how to impress your employer by reading this feedback from employers who participated in WGI scheme in 2017:

“A good intern shows commitment, willingness to self-learn and use their own initiative to make the best use of time, even when others aren't immediately available to coach. A genuine interest in the business, and an ambition to succeed. Good communication skills, emotional IQ and ability to work on "fitting in" even though they may be a junior member of the office. Being smart and willing to work hard2.

i-nexus, strategy execution software specialists

“A good intern is someone committed to the project, who is reliable and professional, who has skills to contribute but who is also keen to learn as much as possible from the internship experience. A good intern can learn quickly and get on with work once parameters are outlined, they will learn how to work well in a team and cope with diverse staff backgrounds. A good intern will listen and learn-but will also contribute thoughtfully their own perspective and experience”.

Action West London, employability and social enterprise charity

“The attributes of a good intern are: willing to get stuck in, do the mundane as well as more interesting tasks, team working, thirst and enthusiasm for the task at hand, working hard, sharing and teaching others their skills, especially IT literacy”

Altair Ltd, specialist housing consultant

What makes a bad intern?

Learn how to avoid disappointing your employer by considering their responses to this question as part of the evaluation of WGI in 2017.

“A bad intern would be disinterested, waiting to be given things to do instead of asking questions and taking initiative. Not representing your true level of interest in the position accurately in interview is likely to result in an intern taking a role that doesn't fit their interests and it will show!”

i-nexus, Strategy Execution software

“Bad intern attributes are not turning up on time, or arriving on time but not starting working until half hour or so later, laziness, arrogance, being selective as to what work to do - i.e. generally not realising that mundane and time-consuming tasks are a day-to-day part of the working week, as well as the more exciting client-facing activities”

Altair Ltd, Specialist Housing Consultant

What to do if...

As an intern you will be treated the same as any other employee, and your supervisor or line manager will be your first point of contact if you have any queries about your work, the organisation, working practices or your pay.

Your employer is responsible for your induction, training and development, arranging any workplace facilities required (ID, work area, telephone, PC and relevant health and safety equipment). They will provide you with a ‘buddy’ to help you settle in, and your line manager will clarify the role that you will be undertaking, and provide opportunities for regular catch ups to review your progress. You will have a more in-depth review in Week 5 which will include a full discussion on the outcomes you have achieved and learning experiences you have had.

The following will give you a guide as whom to contact should you have any queries:

| What to do if... | |
|--|--|
| You are not clear about the tasks that you are being asked to do | Talk to your line manager – it’s always a good idea to check things out if you don’t understand, and your line manager would much rather you did this than struggle with a task. |
| You are left to work on your own for prolonged periods of unsupervised, lone, home or remote working | Talk to your line manager – this should not happen as the employers’ agreement specifies that this should not happen. If this is not addressed, please inform the WGI team. |
| You are not paid | Talk to your line manager – your employer is responsible for paying your salary. Check that the employer has the correct bank account details. If this is not addressed, please inform the WGI team. |
| You have a health and safety concern | Talk to your line manager, but if this is not addressed, please inform the Warwick WGI team. |

Preparing for your internship

Your skills

With so many graduates on the market, employers will look for evidence of work experience and skills. Use the [Warwick Employability Profile and the Skills Directory](#) to analyse your own skills and areas for development. Being able to demonstrate your skills to employers is hugely important, so use the [CARE model \(Context, Action, Result and Evaluation\)](#) to help you.

Consider:

- What have you learned about your skills and potential areas for development?
- How do you expect the internship will contribute to your skills development?
- What are your priority skill development areas?

Your employer

Getting to know more about the organisation you will be working for is a key part of your preparation. Not only will this impress your employer, but it will help you learn about the job quickly. Use the [Mahara researching employers](#) pages to help you.

Consider:

- What does your employer look for in an employee?
- What are the key features of the market in which it operates?
- Are there any specific health and safety issues you need to consider?
- Is there any indication of how you can make a positive impact as an intern?

Moving into a professional world

As an intern you will be expected to behave professionally and adopt the employers' values. Find out more about [professionalism in the workplace](#), the ways to behave professionally and the behaviours to avoid.

Consider:

- How can you develop your own professionalism? How can you demonstrate this?
- What are the key professional values and behaviours expected in your organisation?
- If you witness unprofessional behaviour, how will you deal with it?

Top Tips on Preparing for your Internship

As you prepare for your forthcoming internship, here are a few key thoughts about how to get the most from this opportunity.

1. Set objectives

Work experience of any kind is valid for building your CV and having something meaningful to talk about at interview. The key is to have an idea of what you want to get out of your internship from the outset, so set some clear objectives. Many employers expect to hire their interns eventually, so use your experience to make a good impression. Also use them to get an idea of what working in the sector and with a particular employer is like.

2. Keep a journal

It's surprising how quickly time will pass and you'll soon find yourself at the end of your internship trying to remember what it was all about. By keeping a diary throughout your experience, it will help you to remember what you achieved, which you can review at any time to gather examples for job applications and interviews.

3. Road test your employer

Remember that this isn't just a chance for employers to get to know you. Internships are a great opportunity to experience an organisation before you join. Make sure you take time to think about whether you like the company and its culture. Talk to colleagues about their experiences and don't be afraid to ask questions. Asking good questions shows an employer you are interested in their industry and care about your career.

4. Use what you learn

Interpreting what you've learned, what you understand work to be and demonstrating this to a prospective employer at interview, is one of the biggest challenges of being an intern. Take time to think about your experience and how it could be applied in different situations. Don't overlook how you've developed as a result of casual work or seemingly menial roles too.

5. Show willing

To help make sure you are considered for the next available permanent position make sure you show enthusiasm and energy for whatever is put in front of you. And never sit with nothing to do; there is always something you could be getting on with. Make yourself invaluable by getting involved and asking if you can help out; employers love people who can do the dull stuff as well as the exciting projects. Ultimately, show that you are somebody an employer should invest in.

Preparing for your internship – a checklist

- ✓ Clarify start date and time
- ✓ Identify your key contact in the organisation
- ✓ Plan transport and/or parking arrangements
- ✓ Research your employer and the environment in which it operates
- ✓ Reply promptly to any communications from your employer and Warwick
- ✓ Complete and sign the Letter of Agreement by 15th December 2017; return this to placementlearning@warwick.ac.uk
- ✓ Complete the [Warwick Employability Development Skills Profile](#) to have a better understanding of your skill strengths and areas for development
- ✓ Practise using the [CARE](#) model to demonstrate your skills
- ✓ Identify the key [SMART objectives](#) you aim to achieve during your internship
- ✓ Identify the key skills you wish to develop during your internship
- ✓ Consider if and how working as a professional in an internship role will be similar or different to previous experiences of working or studying

Week 1: Starting your internship

Your induction

Your employer is responsible for giving you a full induction into the role, your work environment, and the organisation. This will include:

- An introduction to the organisation and its structure
- An introduction to senior members, relevant staff and other team members
- Allocation of a workplace 'buddy' or mentor who will help you settle into your role
- A tour of the facilities including work and 'breakout' areas, where to get food, location of the nearest toilets and where the fire exits are situated
- A full induction into health and safety procedures including relevant risk assessment information. Make sure that you are familiar with all the relevant policies and procedures. More information on [health and safety procedures](#) is available on Mahara.

Understanding the business culture

Understanding the [business culture](#) and [business etiquette](#) is essential to the success of your internship; it is important to be aware of the business behaviours that will be expected of you in the professional workplace.

Consider:

- What observations can you make about the business culture in the organisation?
- How does the organisation create an environment where colleagues feel comfortable and secure?
- How much interaction is there between colleagues, and how, where and when does this take place?
- Are you clear about what is expected of you?

Starting your internship – a checklist

- ✓ Complete all relevant induction processes
- ✓ Find out about your role and the tasks you will be expected to undertake
- ✓ Clarify your working hours and breaks including staff refreshment facilities
- ✓ Clarify what is expected of you and what are the employers' desired outcomes
- ✓ Familiarise yourself on procedure for notifying your supervisor/line manager of any absence
- ✓ Inform your employer about any access or support needs that may require adjustments

Weeks 1 to 6: During your internship

So you have had your induction, you are getting to know your colleagues, and you are gradually becoming familiar with the business culture. You will also have been given some tasks or a project to undertake. How do you ensure that you make the most of your internship? How do you demonstrate that you are a valuable asset that your employer cannot manage without?

Have a look at the Mahara pages for resources that will help you and prepare you for the Week 5 review with your employer.

Setting objectives

As you were preparing for your internship you will have thought about what you wanted to achieve from the experience. Now you are ready to [set your objectives](#) - work with your line manager to set objectives to maximise your learning experience whilst retaining a focus on your long term career goals

Consider:

- How do these objectives fit in to your long term career plans?

Keeping a journal

Previous interns have highlighted the value in recording their experiences and reflecting on what they have learned. Learn more about how and why you should incorporate [reflective writing](#) into your internship experience.

Consider:

- What are you learning during this internship – about yourself, your colleagues, your working environment and the organisation?
- How can you articulate your experience in a way that will be useful for your future?

Developing commercial awareness

Employers value graduates with commercial awareness. Graduates who have used internship opportunities to develop their understanding of the commercial world are better placed to secure employment. Learn more about [commercial awareness](#) and why this is one of the most important skills to develop during your internship.

Consider:

- What have you learned about the organisation and the business environment?
- How could you apply this commercial awareness to your job search activities?

Networking

Did you know that it's estimated that 80% of all job opportunities are never advertised, but are offered to individuals already known to the employer? Developing your [networking skills](#) will undoubtedly contribute to a successful internship as well as your future career opportunities.

Consider:

- What is the most effective strategy for networking in this organisation?
- Who is the most successful networker and what strategies do they use?

Top Tips for Effective Networking;

Networking is not restricted to just face to face communication. It can also be in the form of online (forum) discussions, telephone conversations and email exchange.

1. Introduce yourself

You only have once chance to make your first impression – so make this count! Be confident make eye contact, smile with a firm handshake make your body language open and friendly.

2. Be Active

You need to ensure that you are engaged and actively taking part in opportunities that will be taking place around you. Networking with colleagues throughout your internship may lead to future collaboration opportunities or help in providing you with support on the work that you are completing.

3. Be Helpful

You will find that kindness is returned by kindness. Where possible, try to get involved in other activities that your team/ department are undergoing. This will allow you to be further integrated within the team and build on the new professional relationships.

4. Pay attention – Listen

When you are networking with individuals or groups, make sure you do not see this as an opportunity to talk ONLY. You need to listen to others and hear what they have to contribute, you never know when something useful will be shared.

5. Be Visible

Try and integrate yourself in conversations or informal gatherings taking place, again when and where appropriate. If you are not a natural networker, consider asking a 'connector' to make introductions, or getting a 'buddy' to go along, to help boost your confidence in a networking situation. Try and be consistent with your communication and when appropriate, you can demonstrate visibility through emails, blog posts or forums.

6. Ask – Do not assume

Do not be afraid to ask questions. You may think that the instructions for tasks given are unclear or incomplete so therefore you require more information – do not be afraid to obtain clarity. Where possible, try to use your initiative and conduct a little investigation yourself

7. Stand out from the crowd

Think about it from the other person's point of view – if you are at an event or attending a meeting in which there are others similar to yourself then will people remember you? Try to think about your USP. What is it that will allow you to stand out from the crowd?

8. Follow up

After you have created a contact build on the relationship that you have just created. If you said you would, or if there is a need to, follow up with a personalised email rather than a generic one. When appropriate, you may wish to follow up with a phone call.

9. Stay Connected

A great way to stay connected with your network is by using tools such as LinkedIn. If you haven't already you may wish to set up your own account and be prepared to add new people as and when you meet them. You will also be able to link to relevant organisations to help you to stay informed about developments in the sector. Taking part in relevant discussion forums and posting current information about what you working on will feature in your newsfeed. As increasing number of employers use LinkedIn for their recruitment purposes, using the tool will leads to discovering further opportunities.

For an overview of LinkedIn watch the Student Careers and Skills video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-invCgILLw>

The LinkedIn website provides a range of resources to demonstrate how LinkedIn can be used to find a job, increase your connections and discover your personal brand: <https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>

For more information about how you can use LinkedIn to build your professional profile, check the LinkedIn website:

https://university.linkedin.com/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/StudentGuide_WithCalendar.pdf

During Week 5 your employer will be meeting with you to review your objectives and your [Warwick Employability Development Skills Profile](#). This will be a perfect opportunity for you to start to identify what you have learned from your experience, and to start to articulate this experience in a way that will support your career development in the future.

During your internship – a checklist

- ✓ Discuss and agree your objectives with your line manager
- ✓ Keep a reflective journal to record your observations and learning experiences
- ✓ Describe the business culture and how it is communicated
- ✓ Identify the key methods of communication used and evaluate the effectiveness
- ✓ Develop your network of professional connections using LinkedIn, or find out how your colleagues develop their professional connections
- ✓ Research the organisation and the business environment to develop your commercial awareness skills
- ✓ Report any work place accidents or incidents you are involved in and any health and safety concerns that are not addressed by your employer to Warwick

Week 5: Review and Reflect

During Week 5 your employer will be meeting with you to review your [objectives](#) and your [Warwick Employability Development Skills Profile](#). This will be a perfect opportunity for you to start to identify what you have learned from your experience, and to start to articulate this experience in a way that will support your future career development.

Gather any data or evidence that may be useful later, for example how many new clients you contacted, attendances at any events you helped organise, outcomes from any projects you were involved with.

Get feedback from your manager, even if it's not built in as a formal part of your internship. Internships should be a learning experience and constructive feedback will help you to grow.

Use the [CARE model](#) to describe the experiences you have had and the skills that you have gained. Write a [reflective piece](#) to evaluate where you are in terms of your personal development and achieving your objectives.

Update your CV to include your internship experience. Share this with your employer and get some feedback; they are best placed to identify the relevant skills and attributes valued in their particular commercial sector.

Week 6: Completing your internship

Congratulations on successfully completing your WGI internship!

Final WGI task – Case Study

This should include:

- A short description of your role in the organisation you worked in and a summary of what you gained from the experience
- The progress of your personal development and internship objectives, taking into consideration how this has changed from your initial application to completion of your internship
- Whether any of your objectives changed along the way, and why
- New skills you have learned and existing skills that you have consolidated
- What you have found easy and difficult
- One unexpected outcome from your internship – this could be a skill that you developed that you hadn't expected, a task that you completed that you didn't think you had the confidence to do
- Any ways in which your ideas have changed
- How the experience has influenced your career path/plan

Please submit this to placementlearning@warwick.ac.uk by 10th March 2018.

Have a look at the Mahara page [completing your internship](#) to find out what you need to do next, and details of additional resources you can use to support you.

Completing your internship – a checklist

- ✓ Discuss any outstanding tasks with your manager and make any necessary arrangements to handover your work to relevant team members
- ✓ If you have been involved in a project, consider how you are going to share the outcomes with your manager and colleagues
- ✓ Submit your WGI Case Study (see above) to placementlearning@warwick.ac.uk by 10th March
- ✓ Log in to MyAdvantage and complete the WGI evaluation form
- ✓ Update your CV and LinkedIn profile
- ✓ Find out how Warwick [Careers and Skills](#) can continue to support you as a graduate