For-Profit Employers: Guidelines for Unpaid Internships

While most for-profit companies offer paid internships, there are occasional exceptions. The following guidelines are used by the Portland State University Career Center for determining the appropriateness of unpaid internships with for-profit companies.

These guidelines are derived from the National Association of Colleges & Employers criteria for unpaid internships as well as the Oregon Bureau of Labor & Industries standards for unpaid training. They are in place to ensure that unpaid internships are appropriate and meaningful educational opportunities for our students.

Guidelines for Unpaid Internships:

- The Internship is highly educational and will primarily benefit the intern
- Learning objectives for the Intern should be established before beginning the internship and revisited regularly with the intern to ensure ongoing objectives are being met
- The Intern is supervised throughout the internship and is not the on-site expert for any project
- The Intern should not displace a paid employee
- The Employer derives no immediate financial advantage from the intern (i.e., no selling)
- No more than 30% of the Intern’s time should be spent on clerical or repetitive tasks
- The internship is credit worthy and would qualify as a substantial learning experience such that a faculty member may approve the internship as an appropriate credit-bearing experience

If after reading through the guidelines above you feel your internship opportunity falls within these parameters, please continue to the Internship Posting Form(link).

If you have questions about these terms, please contact us at:

careerconnect@pdx.edu or 503-725-4613.

Thank you for your interest in Portland State University’s students.