

An Employer's Guide to Ryerson's Journalism Internships 2016-17

The Ryerson School of Journalism works with employers to offer final-year undergraduate students work experience for academic credit. Payment by the placement employer is not strictly required, but would be gratefully accepted, whether in the form of paycheque, stipend, or even just reimbursement for transit and meal expenses.

Students who take on internships have the opportunity to gain experience and develop portfolios by gathering, writing, producing, disseminating and/or editing information at a professional level. Employers who are interested in joining this program may find the following FAQs helpful:

How long is a placement?

A full-time internship placement of 35-40 hours per week takes place over **six weeks** in one of four internship sessions September to April that we refer to as f1, f2, w1 and w2. The session periods run **roughly**:

- f1: the Tuesday after Labour Day to mid-October;
- f2: mid-to late October to early December;
- w1: early Jan to mid February;
- w2: early March to mid April.

How is a student matched to an employer?

Students seek their placements independently. We may provide guidance when asked, but we are unable to **assign** students to internships; it is strictly their responsibility and choice. This means that any placement employer who signs on with us cannot be guaranteed they will have an intern for any given session.

What is expected of the intern?

Students are expected to provide a CV and/or online portfolio for the consideration of the would-be placement employer. They must make themselves available for interviews,

writing tests or other screening mechanisms (see ****NB**** below).

Once on board, they are expected to show up every day, on time, and ready to go. Their work should provide value to the placement employer, and must be satisfactory both to the workplace supervisor(s) as well to their faculty supervisor in the School of Journalism.

What is expected of the employer?

If, as a potential placement employer, you are new to the Ryerson School of Journalism, we ask that you provide a one-page information sheet that we can present to students on our internship website.

Please use your organisation's letterhead, or at least provide a logo or some kind of visual branding. Kindly include the following information.

- general information about the company, organization or enterprise, including location;
- what you are looking for in an intern;
- the type of work the intern would do;
- the level of mentorship/supervision/support the intern could expect;
- is this a paid placement? Is there is any kind of remuneration or stipend?
- please don't include any specific dates. This is meant as a generic information sheet.
We'll come back to you once a year to enquire whether you would like to update any of the information you have previously provided;
- the person, and their title, to whom the prospective intern should address themselves.
Obviously also contact information;
- anything else you feel prospective interns should know about the placement you are offering.

The placement employer is to provide the intern with meaningful participation in activities compatible with the journalistic or communications role for which the student's education has prepared them.

The intern should be made to feel welcome at story meetings, strategy sessions or other organisational gatherings appropriate to their entry level placement. Clerical, coffee-schlepping, or other or "go-fer" responsibilities are not permitted. If tasks such as shotlisting and teleprompting are part of the intern's responsibilities, they should be combined with other, less tedious responsibilities. No one denies that shotlisting and teleprompting are valuable and important skills at the entry level, but they ought not constitute the lion's share of the intern's responsibilities.

We *prefer* that the work take place in an actual, physical working environment rather than from home or remotely. This is to ensure appropriate levels of mentorship and supervision. If there is no actual workplace *per se*, as is the case with some small but wonderful enterprises that we know through experience provide great placements, the workplace employer will ensure adequate supervision and mentorship are provided

through weekly meetings with the intern.

The placement employer should provide students with frequent, constructive feedback. At the end of the placement, the employer or the intern's supervisor(s) are required to fill in and submit a performance evaluation on a form provided by the intern.

As well, once a placement is completed and we have received the performance evaluation from the employer, we ask each student to review the placement in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. We ask about the quality of supervision and mentorship offered during the placement, the nature and value of the tasks asked of the intern, the level of knowledge or skills acquired while on placement, and whether the student would commend the placement to any potential interns coming after them. This enables us to judge whether the placement meets the standards we expect and require, and serves as an extremely useful tool for students who have a broad range of placements from which to choose. To ensure students' privacy even long after the placement has ended, we are under no obligation to share these reviews with the placement employer.

The provincial WSIB insurance scheme covers the vast majority of placements. In some cases, other insurance arrangements may be necessary. Workplace insurance is of course mandatory.

==== **NB** =====

Our senior-level students have taken a variety of specialised courses intended to prepare them for the rigours of the **professional** working world, which in most cases begins with their internship placements. These courses build on the skills already imparted in the foundational courses they took earlier in the program. As any of us who have ever attended school at any level already know, some students do brilliantly well, while others only just get by. You are welcome and indeed encouraged to conduct your own screening before taking on board an intern from the Ryerson School of Journalism.

WE WILL, IN CONSULTATION WITH YOU, permit students to **fail** this course. We have done so in the past (rarely of course), and are always prepared to do so again when things go badly wrong and the student's performance is the root cause.

We do stand by our students; if we did not think they were ready for prime time, they would not be allowed to take the Internship course. That said, on those rare occasions when things do go pear-shaped, there will be no recrimination, only hope on both sides for a better mutual experience next time.

Please contact Jagg Carr-Locke, Associate Professor and Internship Coordinator, if you need more information.

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