

Hello potential internship employers!

2018-19

If you're interested in exploring the possibility of working with an undergraduate intern from the Ryerson School of Journalism, this FAQ sheet is the place to start.

I oversee our undergraduate internship program, and I am available by email or phone (and where time permits, in person as well) to talk with you further and answer any other questions.

In the meantime, I hope the information below makes a good start.

This FAQ is normally accompanied by a second document, called "Overview for Employers", which goes into some further detail about expectations on both sides.

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- Q: How long are the internships?
A: Either six weeks full time, or 12 weeks part time. We aim for 240 hours, although in some cases, and at our discretion, 225+ hours may be acceptable.
- Q: Are student interns available year-round?
A: Yes. Internships may be taken during any of the three academic semesters that span the calendar year: Fall (Sept-Dec), Winter (Jan-April), and Spring/Summer (These dates are less prescribed than the other two. Spring/Summer internships may take place any time between mid-April and late August.).

Q: Are internships paid?

A: We love it when they are, but it is not a legal requirement. As long as there is a *quid pro quo* – in this instance, academic credit – then payment is not mandatory. Of course honoraria or stipends – or even TTC fare – are gratefully accepted.

Q: So placements are definitely for academic credit?

A: Yes, and unlike pay, this one *is* a legal requirement. Potential employers are prohibited from offering “internships” to any student who will not receive academic credit for the hours spent. There are many reasons for this prohibition, including the fact that any student not receiving credit is not, and cannot be, insured.

Q: Insurance. That’s important. What do I need to know?

A: In the vast majority of cases, WSIB (Workers’ Safety Insurance Board) insurance covers the student, even when the placement is outside Ontario or Canada. Documents specific to the employer must be signed on or before the first day of the internship. (The student has a version they must sign as well). In those rare instances where WSIB is not in play, Ryerson will ensure students are covered, but this needs to be known in advance of the placement so that the university’s insurance kicks in.

Q: Can *any* organisation get on board as a potential internship employer?

A: No. The work on offer must link in some way to what the students’ coursework has prepared them for. But that’s no great limitation! By their fourth year, students have picked up a very broad range of skills and experiences that go beyond the strict confines of the daily newsroom. Our students are good writers, and usually very adept at communications or social media-type work of any kind. And they can produce that work on a variety of platforms.

We require a commitment from the employer that the student will be properly supported, supervised, and mentored. More about that in the accompanying Overview document.

Q: What else do you take into consideration regarding potential internship employers?

A: We have to be mindful of the *scope* of what we’re trying to do. We simply haven’t got the capacity to engage with the vast numbers of would-be placement employers who contact us year round. Each employer relationship needs to be developed and nurtured, and to the extent possible, conducted between human beings and not computers. Relationships also need to be kept current and up-to-date, and that takes time as well. We receive many more enquiries about the program, and requests for our student interns, than we can possibly handle. If you don’t get a quick reply from me, try again. I strive to respond quickly, but sometimes there are so many balls in the air – and emails in the Inbox – that cracks appear.

Q: If you decide that the internship I'm offering would benefit your students, what happens next?

A: I need a posting from you, preferably in .pdf, but .docx is ok too. I will email it to all students registered in the upcoming semester, and it will also go up on our internship website where it can be seen by any student in the internship stream (but no one else). It will remain on the website unless and until it stops attracting traffic. We do our best to ensure postings contain accurate information, so we will ask you each year either to refresh your posting, or sign off on what is already there. Likewise, please contact me if any of the information (particularly pertaining to how, and with whom, to make contact) changes. We cannot edit individual postings; please be prepared to send us a whole new file so we can simply swap it in.

Q: What information do you want in the posting?

A: Please keep it to a single page, preferably on letterhead (the visual element of a **logo** helps attract eyeballs and confers a certain credibility). Kindly include the following information, and not necessary in the order below:

- *general information about the company, organisation 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? If not paid per se, is there is any kind of remuneration or stipend?*
- *please don't include specific dates. The posting you provide is meant as a generic guide that we can keep on the website, preferably without revision, for up to a year;*
- *the person, and their title, to whom the prospective intern should address themselves, as well as that person's contact information;*
- *anything else you feel prospective interns should know about the placement you are offering.*

Q: Are we guaranteed a steady stream of interns?

A: I am afraid not. We have many more internship employers than we do students seeking internships at any given time. Some offerings are snapped up immediately by students; some, I am sorry to say, are never pursued. In the latter case we simply have to agree that students are looking elsewhere, and after one year of no hits, the posting comes down. But I can do no more than accept your posting and make it known to students. "If you build it, they might come. They also might *not* come."

Q: What about the paperwork? There must be a lot.

A: Not too much, happily, and what there is, is done electronically. We employ an information management system. It was designed broadly for all the schools in the Faculty of Communication and Design that offer internships, but is customisable to each. Its very unsexy name is "FCAD Internship Tracker", or FIT for short. Students follow a series of steps that enable them to download the documents they and you need to sign before the internship begins. Students are auto-prompted to check in with me periodically so I can ensure things are ok. Toward the end of the internship, the person whose name and contact information the student has provided will be auto-prompted to complete an evaluation of the student and their work. FYI the student has additional work to do for me before they can complete the course. The course is Pass/Fail.

Please get in touch if there is anything else you'd like to know.

THANK YOU FOR ENQUIRING ABOUT OUR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.