

Hello potential internship employers!

2019-20

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: Generally speaking, they run six weeks full time, or 12 weeks part time. There can be some variation to this, depending on the circumstances of individual students. The **required number of hours is 210**, and in the case of unpaid internships, we ask that the number of hours not exceed 240.

Q: Are student interns available year-round?

A: Normally yes, although the summer cohort is somewhat in flux and we're not yet sure how many students we'll allow in summer 2020. Otherwise internships will be offered during the standard academic year, in both fall (Sept-Dec) and winter (Jan-April).

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: They absolutely must be so. Potential employers who wish to partner with us 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 either pay or 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 for-credit intern, 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 private insurance scheme 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. By their fourth year, students have picked up a very broad range of skills and experiences. Our students are good writers, generally good reporters, and usually very adept at communications or social media-type work of any kind. And they can produce different styles of 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. Those relationships that are considered ongoing (“evergreen”) 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: It depends on the nature of the internship on offer. I will determine whether it will go onto our internship website as an evergreen posting, or whether I will forward your posting in a one-off email to the next incoming cohort.

In the case of the former, postings will remain on the website unless and until they stop attracting traffic.

We do our best to ensure postings contain accurate information, **so kindly inform us of any changes as soon as they occur, for example, the job description has changed or there is a new contact person.** We do not edit the individual postings ourselves; please be prepared to send us a whole new document so we can simply swap it in.

Q: What information do you want in the posting?

A: As mentioned, it should be evergreen (i.e., no specific start/finish dates). Please keep it to a single page if possible, preferably on your organisation's letterhead; the visual element of a **logo** helps attract eyeballs and confers a certain professionalism. Kindly include the following information:

- *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?*
- *the person, and their title, to whom the prospective intern should address themselves, as well as that person's contact information;*
- *please specify what you would like interested students to include in their initial approach to you. Some prospective employers prefer students simply enquire about the possibility of an internship within a certain time frame, while others prefer to receive a CV and work samples at first contact;*
- *anything else you feel prospective interns should know about the placement you are offering.*

If you would like to receive a sampling of some of our postings, to see what others have done effectively, I would be happy to send some along.

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 rarely or 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. I have also noticed that some postings seem to go in and out of fashion. In the end I can do no more than accept your posting and ensure students see it.

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. Periodically throughout their placement, students are auto-prompted to check in with me 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 online evaluation of the student and their work. Please be aware that whether a student successfully completes the internship course for credit is not determined solely by your evaluation; 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.