

An Academic Internship is a planned and supervised practical experience in a vocational or educational setting. Interns acquire practical skills while applying classroom theory and principles.

## Objectives

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Imagine you are a month from graduation and are finally getting around to looking for a full-time position. You send a couple resumes but get no responses. You send a few more and get only one interview. This interview does not go as planned. Finally, a few months after graduation, a company makes you an offer. You are relieved! Unfortunately you quickly discover that this is not the role within the company that suits your talents the best and the company itself does not particularly interest you. To make matters worse, you make a few newbie mistakes adjusting from academic life to the workplace. As you reflect on this purpose, you wish you had a chance to hit the “reset” button and do it all again with the benefit of your new knowledge.

This is essentially what the internship experiences is meant to accomplish.

The purpose of the internship is to give you a “dress rehearsal” for a full time job. This will show you:

- **How to find a job.** You will go through exactly the same process looking for an internship as you will looking for a full-time position. You will learn how to find job listings, work connections, create a resume to best represent what is unique about you, conduct an interview, and accept a position. Sure you will not get it right the first time, but hopefully you will when it really matters (finding a full-time position).
- **How to adjust to the workplace.** You will get exposed to office politics, working with others, and getting the most of your worker-manager relationship. You will figure out how to work in one place for eight to ten hours a day and how to work on the same project for hundreds of hours. You will learn to cope with being overwhelmed with the things you do not know and learn how to get traction so you can be productive.
- **What you still need to learn.** Your strengths and weaknesses as a software engineer will become very apparent to you as you apply what you learned to a real-world task. Take careful stock of what skills you need to acquire to be successful in the workplace. When you finish the internship and come back to school, make sure you acquire those skills so you can be as effective as possible when you accept a full-time position.
- **What you want to do with your career.** Ideally your internship should be as closely aligned with your target position upon graduation. This includes the role you play (developer, tester, program manager, etc.), the technology you use (web, mobile, desktop, etc.), the industry of the company (e-commerce, games, industrial, productivity, etc.), and the type of company (large/small, formal/informal, start-up/established, etc.). When you are finished with your internship, you should have a much better idea of where you want your career to go.

Ultimately, it is up to you what you get out of your internship. While it is typically only a single credit, your internship is perhaps the most important component of your academic experience at BYU-Idaho.

# Finding an Internship

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You are responsible for finding your own internship. The Academic Discovery Center has many resources to help you with this process, but ultimately it is up to you. You should think about throwing up to a hundred resumes. Plan on a couple dozen phone interviews. You will probably do a half dozen fly-out or final interviews. Do not get discouraged when you do not get accepted for a job; it is difficult for the employer to find a good fit for their position and it is difficult for you to find a good fit for your skills and interests.

For a job to count as an internship, it must meet the following requirements:

- **Be full time for a semester.** It does not matter if your internship fits exactly over a semester, but it does matter that you do 500 hours over the course of your internship.
- **Be similar to your target job.** Think about the job you want upon graduation. Your internship should be as similar to that job as possible.
- **Be a new position for you.** You must learn something new; your existing job does not count.
- **Have a mentor.** Your boss should be more knowledgeable about your job than you.
- **Be face-to-face.** No independent study or online work here.

Once you have done these things, you will need to get your internship approved:

1. Go to the Academic Discovery Center site: <http://www.byui.edu/internships/internship-approval>.
2. Fill out the questionnaire that details the job you found. You will be asked to specify the number of credits you want. Choose 1 because only 1 is required for graduation and each extra credit will put you closer to the 140 credit limit. Choose 4 because you tend to get an 'A' on your internship and it will boost your GPA.
3. Br. Helfrich will either approve it or contact you for clarification. Please make yourself available to answer any questions that may come up.
4. After your internship has been approved, you can register for CS 398.

If you feel you have “significant industry experience” in a related field, your internship could be waived. Please contact [HelfrichJ@byui.edu](mailto:HelfrichJ@byui.edu) if you think this applies to your situation.

# Tips for a Successful Internship

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The following tips have been passed down by those who went before you.

- **Be friendly.** Manage your relations with every one of your co-workers very carefully. Treat everyone with respect and make them feel like you value their opinions.
- **Be cautious with e-mail.** Re-read every email you send. Check for the tone. Is the recipient likely to take the message the way you intended? Can anyone be offended by what you say? Does it appear professional?
- **Be courageous.** Do not be afraid to try hard things or to “put yourself out there.” Several people report in their journals how they wish they asked to participate in something or had the courage to try something. They feel their lack of courage cost them opportunity.
- **Be deliberate.** It takes a long time to establish a reputation and only a single careless moment to destroy it. On a test in school, if you don't know an answer you “wing it.” Do not do that in the workplace! If you don't know an answer, be clear on that point.
- **Be patient.** It will take almost week to get your computer set up and hooked into the project, and another couple weeks to learn the technology. This is par for the course!
- **Internships missionaries!** In many areas, there are service missionaries whose entire job is to find affordable housing for BYU-Idaho interns. Look for them!

# Assessment

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In an effort to help you get the most out of your internship, the following will be asked of you:

## Journal

Keep a daily journal wherein you record details of what you are learning and what you are contributing. Some guidelines:

- Get in the habit of jotting down a few notes at the end of the day. This should just take a couple minutes. The act of writing things down helps you reflect on what happened.
- Record major events as a point of reference. This will come in handy when you write your final report. It is also very interesting to read at the end.
- Make a note about what you learned, still need to learn, and wish you had already learned.

Your journal will account for an even 50% of your overall grade. Please keep it in a notebook (which you will need to send to me), create a Word document (which you can e-mail), or create a BLOG (send me the link). You will be graded on:

- **Diligence:** An entry exists every day of the internship
- **Detail:** Abundant evidence of introspection and many events are described in detail.

## Report

Near the end of your internship, please create a report summarizing your work experience. This should not be a rehashing of your journal (though you may wish to cite events in your journal). Instead, it should address these five questions:

1. How did my time at BYU-Idaho prepare me for this internship? Be as specific as possible.
2. What do I wish I had learned in school before my internship?
3. How could I have done the internship itself better? Are there any mistakes that I would avoid?
4. Is there another role or company that I would prefer to work for as a full-time position?
5. What will I do when I return to school to prepare myself for a full-time position?

Imagine having a younger sibling following in your footsteps. In many ways, this report should be written to him/her.

Your final report will constitute the remaining 50% of your grade and must be submitted as a Word document. You will be graded on:

- **Writing.** The document is an “easy and enjoyable” read.
- **5 Questions:** The degree in which the five above questions are answered. Evidence of reflection will be the most important factor here.

## Submission

Send the journal and report to [HelfrichJ@byui.edu](mailto:HelfrichJ@byui.edu). The journal and the final report are due the last day of the semester, before testing days begins. Please check the academic calendar to determine exactly what day that is. At that point in time, grades will be submitted. If your journal or report is not received by that time, an F will be entered for your grade. We can change that F to another grade during the next semester if work is turned in late, but you don't want to go through that hassle.