Careers and Employability guide to internships
Internships, usually short-term positions from a few weeks to a few months, are a valuable way to gain work experience, to find out about an industry or creative sector, and to make professional connections that can help open doors for your career. An internship in your chosen area of work shows future employers that you have been proactive in gaining hands-on experience, knowledge and new skills.

Where to find an internship

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Opportunities</th>
<th>Approach employers</th>
<th>Social media channels</th>
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<td>UAL’s jobs board and advertises a large range of paid internships each month. Employers want to work with UAL students so bookmark it and check it regularly as new opportunities are added every day.</td>
<td>Many creative employers run internship schemes, so it’s always worth checking their company websites or taking the initiative and getting in touch to register your interest or you could even send a speculative application.</td>
<td>Lots of companies advertise their internship programmes via social media channels like LinkedIn and Twitter so make sure you are following your dream employer to be the first to hear about opportunities.</td>
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Making the most of your internship

When researching internships it is useful to reflect upon what you are looking for and the logistics of making it work such as:

- the industry, sector and/or type of organisation you need to gain experience in
- how much time you can commit to an internship
- what sort of work you want to do
- the skills, knowledge and networks you most want to gain
- where you will live during the internship
- the travel distance between home and work
- whether you will be able to work part-time or full-time
- whether you will need time off to attend interviews

While you are an intern there are a few things to think about:

- Establish a mentor – someone you can call on for advice before, during or after the internship.
- Conduct yourself as an actual employee – it is important to be professional at all times.
- Observe, ask questions, listen and learn as much as possible about the workplace and industry/sector you are interested in.
- Update your CV soon after you complete the internship while you can still remember all the new skills you have gained
Internships: Know your facts
In the current employment market internships are often offered as unpaid opportunities. Students and graduates desperate to gain experience often find themselves working unpaid in order to add valuable experience to their CV; and with the hope of getting a paid job at the end of the internship. Not only does this exclude many talented students and graduates from gaining experience, it is likely that many unpaid internships are in breach of UK employment legislation. If your work experience goes beyond shadowing and observing (in other words if you are doing any real work) you should be paid. As well as this, paid internships are often more valuable because employers will want to get ‘real value’ from you, so they will usually provide a structured, valuable and rewarding experience.

Careers and Employability’s position on internships
We recognise that internships are a valuable way to gain the necessary work experience that employers are looking for. However, we do not support unpaid internships. After a period of research in 2012, including surveying UAL students and graduates, Careers and Employability took the decision to stop advertising all unpaid work placements and internships on Creative Opportunities. We will now only advertise internships if employers have agreed that they will pay at least the National Minimum Wage.

We strongly encourage students and graduates to only apply for paid internships, to be fairly treated and rewarded for your work, and to help break a culture of unpaid work in the creative industries. Paid internships not only support you while working, but are likely to provide a much more fulfilling and productive work experience, with employers valuing and expecting more from the intern.

Careers and Employability fair internships animation
creativeopportunities.arts.ac.uk/fairinternships

Your legal rights as an intern
It is a common misconception that using the word ‘Intern’ in a job description or calling a job ‘work experience’ means the position can be unpaid. There is no legal definition of an ‘internship’. An intern undertaking work experience who satisfies any of the following criteria is considered to be a ‘worker’ under UK employment law and will be entitled to receive the National Minimum Wage.

Criteria for ‘worker’ status:
- if the tasks you are asked to complete go beyond shadowing and training
- if the tasks you complete are of ‘real value’ to the employer i.e. would a paid employee otherwise be doing the work?
- If you are asked to commit to particular hours of work
- If there is a written, verbal or implied contract of work between you and the employer

You cannot sign away your right to be paid the Minimum Wage, the employer has a duty to pay it if you are considered a ‘worker’ and if they don’t, they risk a criminal action and a fine. As well as payment rights you should also be covered by the company’s employee insurance, and the employer should comply with UK legislation regarding equal opportunities, employment and health and safety.
What if...

I am happy to work for free so that I can gain valuable experience and contacts
If you do decide to undertake an unpaid internship it’s worth carefully considering what you want to get from the experience before you start, then set yourself a limit for the amount of time you are prepared to work unpaid. Discuss your aims with the company so they can give you relevant experience, and when you reach the end of the internship don’t be afraid to ask to become a paid employee or (at the very least) request a written reference. If the employer has offered to pay your travel expenses be sure to get this agreement in writing before starting the internship, and find out if they set any limits on the amount they will reimburse.

My employer promised to pay me but I still haven’t received any money
Before you start any job it’s a good idea to get written evidence of the employer’s offer. This could be a print-out of the job description, which states the salary offered or even better is a temporary contract in case any dispute arises. If an employer still refuses to pay, there are various support groups such as the Pay and Work Rights helpline, InternAware, the Advertising Standards Authority and the Citizen’s Advice Bureau who should be able to help you further.

I have been asked to complete a short unpaid trial so the employer can assess my suitability for the role before committing to taking me on as a paid member of staff
While you may be asked to complete a short task as part of the interview procedure, unpaid work trials are illegal in the UK and you should not be asked to undertake one. Employers should pay you at least the Minimum Wage for any hours worked during a trial period, even if it’s just for one afternoon or if they decide not to offer you the job.

Should I be getting paid?
If you are unsure about whether you should be paid, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer ‘yes’ to any of them, it is highly likely you should be paid.

- If you weren’t doing this work, would another paid member of staff have to do it?
- Do you have to be at work at a set time in the morning and leave at a set time each night?
- Do you have a written or verbal contract of work?
- Do you undertake specific tasks for the employer?

Pay and Work Rights Helpline
0800 917 2368

www.arts.ac.uk/student-jobs-and-careers/resources/jobs-and-internships/internships-know-your-facts

When you cannot claim the National Minimum Wage
There are two instances when you are exempt from claiming the Minimum Wage:

If you are doing a credit-bearing work placement
Some UK-based courses require students to undertake a placement in order to pass a module on their degree. Students on credit-bearing placements are exempt from the Minimum Wage so employers are not required to pay these students a wage, but they may choose to pay you. These placements are normally organised through your course and are not advertised on Creative Opportunities.

If you are volunteering
Volunteering means working for a registered charity and in this case you give up your right to claim the Minimum Wage.