

COMMITTING TO AN INTERNSHIP is a big deal. Carefully consider the following questions before deciding whether to pursue an internship posting or accept an internship offer.

POSITION

Does the internship involve meaningful work?

It's a fact of life that all jobs and internships – at all levels – involve some less-than-glamorous tasks. But, internships should primarily involve projects or tasks that are meaningful, challenging, and important to the organization.

Does the internship seem too good to be true or a little off?

Listen to your instincts. If the internship promises lots of money for little work, it probably isn't legit. If the employer asks for lots of sensitive personal information and/or money at time of application, be wary.

Is the position paid?

The U.S. Department of Labor compels for-profit employers to pay interns unless they meet 7 fairly strict criteria. Some for-profit employers believe they are in compliance with the guidelines and offer unpaid internships. These experiences can be valid and valuable, but potential interns should closely examine unpaid corporate internships to make sure they provide ample learning, supervision, and skill development. Non-profit, government, and educational employers are not subject to the DOL criteria; unpaid internships in those sectors are common.

EMPLOYER

Does the employer seem committed to your learning?

The primary distinction between an internship and a part-time job is the intentional focus on student learning. Supervisors should help interns create, work towards, and reflect on learning goals that relate to their academic or professional goals. Were learning goals addressed in the position description or interview process?

Will an assigned supervisor provide ongoing support and feedback?

Given that internships have a strong focus on learning, interns should receive intentional onboarding, ongoing supervision, and frequent feedback by an experienced supervisor who models professional and ethical behavior. Do you know who the internship supervisor is? Do you think you can learn from that person? Will that person be available for regular check-ins?

YOU

Does the internship really interest you?

This seems basic, but it's worth a mention. Don't do an internship *just* to do an internship. If you're not innately interested in a position, you probably won't put forth the effort necessary to fully benefit from the experience, to build skills worthy of mention in future job interviews, or to get stellar recommendations from your internship supervisor later.

Do you have the time to fully engage in the internship?

Internship supervisors will expect you to show up (on time!) and work hard during your agreed upon shifts. If you don't think you realistically have enough time or mental energy to commit to another activity (or the time or means to get to and from an internship site), think about waiting a quarter or two. A half-hearted internship doesn't benefit anybody.

RESOURCES:

- > Meet with a **career coach** to further assess whether an internship is right for you. Learn more at careers.uw.edu/career-coaching.
- > Check out our **Identifying Scam or Fraudulent Postings** handout: careers.uw.edu/resources/identifying-scam-and-fraudulent-job-postings
- > Email Briana Randall at brianakr@uw.edu if you have concerns about an internship posting or experience.