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Guidelines for internships at Stellenbosch University

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Guidelines for internships at Stellenbosch University

1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to empower various environments at Stellenbosch University (SU) to effectively implement and manage internship programmes.

2. Definition

An internship is a planned, structured and managed programme that provides work experience for an agreed period of time (normally no longer than 18 months).

The South African Board for People Practices (2014) defines an intern as follows: “A person who is employed at an entry-level position in an organisation in a structured programme to gain practical experience in a particular occupation or profession. This excludes work placement trainees, but includes interns at various levels, for example school leavers and graduates. An intern may be undergoing other part-time studies to gain or improve qualifications in that occupation or profession. The internship may be part of a statutory professional development programme such as health professionals, accountants and lawyers, or set up by one or more employers independently of a professional body. A structured graduate training or development programme normally satisfies the definition of an internship, and the terms may be used interchangeably.”

3. Types of internships

- 3.1 Graduate internships offered to persons who have completed a qualification, but have been unemployed and require workplace experience in order to enhance their future employability
- 3.2 Student internships offered to students or persons enrolled at a tertiary education institution who require practical experience as part of their study programmes
- 3.3 Internships linked to professional development (e.g. the Department of Science and Technology’s Science, Engineering and Technology Industry Internship Programme) and internships required for registration with professional bodies or councils (e.g. the Health Professions Council of South Africa).

4. Status of interns

Interns are employees for the purposes of labour law. As they render personal service, they fall within the definition of an “employee”. For this reason, they must also be paid in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

Internships are either funded by SU itself, the sector education and training authorities (SETAs) or other external implementing agencies.

5. Objectives of internship programmes

- 5.1 To develop a potential pool of qualified candidates for future SU appointments, with the emphasis on candidates from the designated groups.
- 5.2 To create an opportunity for students who have finished and/or are busy completing their studies to familiarise themselves with the working environment and gain practical experience.
- 5.3 To address the general shortage of qualified and skilled people in the workforce by encouraging graduates to equip themselves with the necessary practical experience.

- 5.4 To provide unemployed graduates with valuable work experience and skills to enhance their employability.
- 5.5 To provide opportunities to gain practical experience for students who are required to do so to earn credits towards a qualification.

6. Guiding principles

- 6.1 Specific industry-funded internships, SETA-funded internships or internships required for professional registration shall be guided by specific guidelines prescribed by these respective bodies.
- 6.2 SU does not have any obligation to offer permanent employment to the incumbents at the end of the internship programme. All contracts with interns must clearly stipulate that there is no guarantee that interns will be appointed to a post in their host faculty/division/department.
- 6.3 The internship programme should not be regarded as a low-cost alternative to full-time employees, but should provide meaningful and value-adding work experience.
- 6.4 Interns may not register for more than one internship programme at a time at SU.
- 6.5 Internships should be structured, work-based programmes.
- 6.6 Ad-hoc appointments of interns on an individual basis must be avoided. Intern appointments should be part of a planned and phased programme.

7. Recruitment and selection

Sourcing and recruitment of interns should follow SU's normal processes (as stipulated in the *Guidelines with regard to support service appointment processes*). Vacancies for interns should be advertised as widely as possible. Tasks to be performed and the development support offered should be carefully defined before embarking on recruitment in order to ensure that these are correctly and precisely targeted. All applications should be reviewed, and selection should occur in terms of the normal SU selection process.

8. Appointment

Interns shall enter into appropriate contracts in line with SU's *Guidelines regulating fixed-term appointments exceeding 3 (three) months*, which will stipulate their remuneration and other conditions of service for the duration of the internship. (Among others, the contract should stipulate that the employer is under no obligation to appoint an intern when the internship expires.) Where internships consist of a tripartite relationship between the employer, the implementing agency/professional body and the intern, parties are bound by standard contracts in relation to the internship scheme. In addition, an internship employment contract is entered into with SU.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act together with SU's *Disciplinary Code and Grievance Procedure* shall apply to all interns.

9. Remuneration and benefits of interns

Interns shall be paid at cost to company as determined by the specific environment, or as prescribed by the implementing agency in the case of externally funded internships where SU acts as the host company. Interns shall be entitled to annual leave in accordance with SU's leave policy, but not to other staff benefits such as medical aid and provident fund.

10. Performance and development

- 10.1** To ensure that interns acquire adequate work knowledge, skills and experience, their performance needs to be monitored.
- 10.2** It is recommended that a mentor/supervisor be assigned upon the appointment of an intern, and a proper development plan should be drafted to assist the intern throughout his/her internship at SU.
- 10.3** Interns shall be afforded an opportunity to be trained in both generic and occupation-specific skills that will enable effective job performance in the field, faculty or division where the interns have been placed.

11. Preparation of the workplace

Before interns commence duty at the host organisation, their workspace needs to be prepared. This preparation includes, but is not limited to, arranging:

- staff/access cards (if required);
- a properly appointed workstation, such as a desk and chair;
- a computer/laptop; and
- an e-mail address as well as access to all required information technology systems and the internet.

12. Induction

Intern induction includes, but is not limited to:

- providing an overview of the internship programme and its objectives;
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved (intern, internship programme management, mentor, host employer, other staff);
- explaining organisational rules and regulations;
- conducting general safety, health and environment induction; and
- supplying information on work hours, breaks and leave.

13. Implementation, monitoring and reporting

The head of the department/division or his/her delegate shall monitor the implementation process and ensure adherence to these guidelines.

14. Termination of internships

Should interns wish to terminate the internship programme before its scheduled end date, they must inform SU in writing. In such an event, the intern must give reasonable notice in consultation with all relevant parties.

15. Testimonial

Upon completion of their internships, interns shall be provided with a testimonial by the head of the environment. This letter shall specify that the intern has completed the internship programme, as well as the particular skills training that the intern received.

16. Roles and responsibilities

16.1 Heads of department/line managers

- Determine the resources required to support the internship, i.e. appropriate workspace and necessary material and equipment.
- Identify mentors/supervisors.
- Budget for internship programmes.
- Approve internship contracts.
- Approve financial arrangements.
- Approve internship plans and programmes. (Once approved, a copy must be sent to Human Resources, along with the completed fixed-term contract form.)
- Monitor and evaluate progress of internship programmes. (The work programme should preferably be structured as a portfolio of evidence and be signed off by line managers as the internship progresses.)
- Prepare reports on the internship programme for relevant stakeholders, whenever these are requested.

16.2 Human resources practitioners

Advise line managers on the implementation of these guidelines as well as appropriate remuneration.

16.3 Mentors/supervisors

- Provide interns with professional guidance.
- Oversee the training and mentoring of interns.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and assessment of interns and submit performance reports.
- Assess and provide feedback to interns regarding the work programme, i.e. provide feedback on performance and conduct scheduled, periodic supervisory consultations appropriate to the programme plan.
- Maintain a personal file on the intern.

16.4 Intern

- Enter into a contract with SU.
- Conclude a task agreement, including a development plan, with the mentor/supervisor.
- Abide by the rules, regulations and protocol of the faculty or division.
- The intern should be provided with a control sheet containing a breakdown of the programme activities and required timeframes that will be used to monitor progress. It shall be the intern's responsibility to ensure that the control sheet is regularly updated, and that these updates are shared with the supervisor.
- Keep a portfolio of evidence.
- Submit progress reports.