

Review of the Best Practice Guidelines for Internships in the Visual Arts

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May 2021

INTERNSHIPS – Best practice guidelines

Objectives of the Guidelines

This document is a review of the Best Practice Guidelines for Internships that was first published in January 2014. The object of this review remains the same, to identify what is the prime purpose of internships and to provide interns with a meaningful, quality experience that will further their career prospects. The objective of the guidelines is to provide clarity, definition and a mutually beneficial arrangement to internships for both organisations and interns in the visual arts. The original guidelines were based on extensive research carried out by the Internship Task Force in collaboration with Visual Artists Ireland.

The taskforce comprised of: Aine Macken, artist; Jim Ricks, artist; Claire Power, Temple Bar Gallery & Studios; Gina O'Kelly, Irish Museums Associations; Dr Josephine Browne, Head of School of Business and Humanities at Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, provided legal advice to the taskforce and Bernadette Beecher, Office Manager and Visual Artist representing Visual Artists Ireland.

Best Practice Guidelines:

- Definition of the internship

There is no legal definition of term internship in respect of Irish or international law. However, a good internship should: provide a valuable supported learning experience; provide mentorship; allow an individual to develop or enhance skills that are applicable to their chosen area; ensure the development of interpersonal work relationships; enable the candidate to learn good work habits such as communication, time and project management skills; offer networking opportunities that will lead to paid employment or help to further the intern's career in other tangible ways. An intern should be provided with a defined role and job title.

- Written agreement

Each intern should be provided with a contract / letter of understanding outlining the role and responsibilities within the organisation that will be allocated to them. A example checklist has been drafted for guidance so as to support a structure that is mutually beneficial to both intern and organisation.

- Objectives – educational

In order to achieve a supportive and advantageous internship; one which will provide a meaningful experience and enhance an interns employability in the future, there should be a clear set of achievable

objectives from the outset. These include transparency on day-to-day activities and responsibilities and clarity of progression within the organisation (if applicable). In general all interns should be given a level of responsibility that will further their experience.

- Recruitment

Interns should be recruited in the same way as regular employees of an organisation, with proper consideration given to how their skills and qualifications fit the tasks they will be expected to undertake.

Recruitment should be conducted in an open and transparent way to enable fair and equal access to available internships.

- Induction

Before the intern starts, a written contract should be put in place defining the intern's working hours, the length of the internship, the intern's goals and their obligations. Any training the intern will require for their role should be planned in advance. This plan should be shared with the intern on their first day. The training should include a health and safety induction tailored to the individual organisation.

- Supervision

Organisations should ensure that there is a dedicated person(s) to supervise the intern and conduct regular performance reviews. This person should provide ongoing feedback to the intern, be their advocate and mentor during the period of the internship, and conduct formal performance reviews to evaluate the success of their time with the organisation.

- Payment & Duration

Minimum wage legislation applies to all employees. As previously stated there is no Irish legal definition of internships. Therefore all interns who are working on behalf of an organisation need to be paid the National Minimum Wage. This definition may not apply where a student is shadowing a professional. However the student may not carry out any work related activities or else they need to be paid. Organisations that employ interns in unpaid positions are exposing themselves to claims for unpaid wages, sick pay, holiday pay and Employers PRSI. There could also be additional fines and penalties.

- Working conditions

Health & Safety: The Host Organisation must be fully compliant with current workplace health and safety and all other legal requirements.

Garda Vetting: The Host Organisation has responsibility to ensure that the appropriate process is applied to placements that require Garda vetting. Interns must agree to comply with requests for Garda Vetting where necessary.

Annual Leave: Interns are entitled to all Public Holidays and 1.75 days annual leave for each month they participate in an internship.

Sick Leave: The maximum cumulative sick leave permissible over the course of an internship is five working days over a three month internship; ten working days over a six to nine month internship.