

Library/information centre Internships: guidance for interns

1. Definition of internship and benefits

Internships refer to supervised practical training in the workplace which permits students, prospective students or graduates to gain valuable experience and up-skill in an environment that complements and develops their formal learning. Internships should include reflective and evaluative components.

The Library Association of Ireland recommends that internships should have a strong mentoring element. The mentor must be an experienced professional with appropriate communication skills, professional expertise and organisational knowledge and the ability to engage with the intern and impart specific knowledge and skills.

On completion of the internship, the intern should have developed his/her skills in an appropriate manner and be able to demonstrate significant learning outcomes and experience.

What to look out for? A good internship will assign a mentor to the intern for the duration of the internship, to provide the following:

- ongoing support
- to be a point of contact for the intern throughout the internship
- provide an induction
- ensure that opportunities to learn/apply skills in the workplace as described in the job description/agreement are available to the intern

they may also provide:

- formal mentoring
- link to LAI CDP certification
- opportunities to attend workshops and other training events
- regular reviews with opportunity for feedback

2. Finding what's out there/on offer

While there is no central directory of library internships in Ireland some academic libraries and the National Library of Ireland may advertise internships on the library website or via the career or employment opportunities of the institution website.

Internships may also be advertised on be advertised on LibraryJobs.ie <http://www.libraryjobs.ie> and guidance and opportunities from the Irish Museums Association may also be helpful <http://www.irishmuseums.org/vacancies-and-opportunities-2>

For international internships contact the appropriate library association for the region.

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) list
<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/iro/intassocorgconf/libraryassociations>

3. The application process

The application depends on the type of internship on offer — if it is part of a state scheme it will be necessary to comply with the appropriate application process. This will normally include completion of a standardised form and compliance with a clear set of criteria.

Read the job description [see *what a job description should cover from employers' document*] and tailor your covering letter and CV appropriately.

Libraries offering/participating in internships will shortly be available via the website.

If no standardised form or set of criteria is set out, use the following guide:

- a) Check what internships are available using some of the sources listed in section 2 of this document;
- b) Look at the website of the organisation you are applying to;
- c) Submit succinct curriculum vitae summarising your qualification skills and relevant experience with covering letter. (max. 2 pages);
- d) The covering letter should include a statement outlining how you see the internship fitting in to your career plan, what you will bring to the role.

What to expect when starting internship programme?

4. Induction

Your mentor should ensure that an induction process is completed. This should be in compliance with state or organisational procedures. In the absence of either of these the following should be covered:

- ✓ Introduction to the building and unit in which the person will be based (to include location of emergency exits, facilities, lockers etc.)
- ✓ Introduction to key staff including HR and other staff with whom the intern will be working
- ✓ Information re communication mechanisms in place in the organisation and unit and how and when to use these
- ✓ Provision of key policy documents and procedures in operation in the particular work environment — these will include Health & Safety Handbook, Acceptable Usage Policies, Bullying & Harassment Policies etc.
- ✓ Key library or information service documents which will provide a contextual framework for the intern
- ✓ Demonstrations of IT resources and general 'how to' guidance

As an intern you should be given time to access, read and absorb documentation and a scheduled time at which you can ask questions and seek clarification on any matter.

You should be satisfied that adequate information has been provided and sign off on this with the mentor and/or HR department as appropriate. The subsequent training provided should match the role responsibilities.

5. Mentoring and ongoing support

It is imperative that the mentor ensures that adequate workplace facilities are in place before the intern starts— desk space, equipment, IT facilities etc.

It is recommended that the mentor should encourage the intern to join the Association and to use the website and avail of CPD opportunities offered by the Association's sections.

From the outset the intern should be provided with opportunities to meet with other staff, attend staff meetings when appropriate and attend workshops and other training events.

Expected learning outcomes should be discussed and expanded upon at an early mentor-intern meeting to afford the intern an opportunity to indicate his/her own expectations of the internship. The intern should be encouraged to maintain a learning journal or portfolio throughout.

Having agreed a schedule for reviews in advance, this should be adhered to and feedback on performance should be given. The intern should be encouraged to provide feedback on an ongoing basis on his/her experience, including indicating issues of concern.

A final review should take place at which the learning outcomes, including benefits to the intern and the organisation should be reviewed. The intern's learning journal should contribute significantly to this.

Before completion of the internship, a final meeting between mentor and intern should be held to reflect on lessons learned and to sign off on the process.

6. General recommendation

We would encourage you to consider joining the Library Association of Ireland, to use the website and avail of CPD opportunities offered by the Association's sections.

We would also recommend you maintain a learning journal or portfolio of your internship and, if you are a member of the LAI, to submit a summary to the LAI for certification. On completion of a library internship the intern should demonstrate that his/her professional skillset has been enhanced.

The procedure to be adopted for certification should be as follows:

1. The intern's mentor¹ should provide information about the CPD certificate opportunity to the intern at the outset.
2. On completion of the internship a two-page reflective report should be compiled by the intern and submitted to the Association's CPD Committee, with an accompanying letter from the mentor at the library verifying the period of the internship and other pertinent data.
These may be emailed to the CPD Chair – cpd@libraryassociation.ie

¹ Regardless of whether the mentor is a member of the Association or not, we would encourage him/her to participate in the CPD opportunity for the benefit of the intern.

It is not necessary for an intern to be a member of the Association to avail of this CPD certification.