

SABPP PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINE
**INTERNSHIPS – A GUIDE
FOR EMPLOYERS**

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SABPP

SA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE PRACTICES

Setting HR standards





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INTRODUCTION



Internships are one of the various ways in which young people can be offered structured entry level positions in their chosen occupation or profession. A well designed internship programme can help to accelerate careers, develop professionalism and good work habits and provide employers with a source of excellent candidates for permanent positions in their specialist areas.

Many organisations offer internships, but all too often these consist of recruiting people known to employees, allocating them to routine, menial tasks, ignoring them as much as possible and releasing them at the end with little or no support in finding further employment.

In the interests of setting suitable South African standards for internships programmes, the SABPP publishes these guidelines as a compilation of good practice in this area.

Even if no permanent positions can be offered, an organisation can still make a valuable contribution to national skills development by setting up an internship programme. The SABPP encourages all employers, whether large or small, to create at least one internship and develop at least one young person for the future of South Africa.

“The road stretches before us. We can be sure of obstacles, small and large, on that road. An eighty-five year old can do much to help us advance but, in the end it is you – the youth – who hold the future of this country in your hands.”

Nelson Mandela, 2003

DEFINITIONS AND LEGAL GUIDELINES

Definitions

There is no universally accepted definition of the term “intern”, except within specific professions such as medicine and health related professions, where it is enshrined in professional regulation. Due to this lack of a definition, different organisations use it differently, which has caused considerable confusion.

To illustrate: the 1976 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines “intern” as “advanced student or recent graduate residing in hospital and acting as assistant physician or surgeon”, while the 2013 on-line version of the same dictionary gives the definition as “a student or trainee who works, sometimes without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification.” This indicates a trend towards broadening the use of the term, as illustrated by the definition used in the website SA Works: “An internship may be defined as a career specific work experience that one undertakes during / after one’s studies in order to gain the practical experience required to operate and make a positive contribution with respect to the career path one eventually pursues.

Other terms are also used to indicate early career, work exposure type of employment, for example, Candidate Attorneys, Trainee Accountants, Trainee Actuaries. The SABPP uses the term Candidate for



early career HR professionals not yet eligible for professional registration. Many organisations have Graduate Training Programmes or programmes of a similar nature.

Another source of confusion in the definition is the range of situations in which early career exposure is provided. For example, the person being trained may still be a learner within the basic education system, a student at a higher education institution, a matriculant or a graduate.

For the purpose of achieving common understanding, the SABPP definitions, which we hope will become accepted throughout South Africa, are:

- **Work exposure:** a planned period of visits to the workplace, under appropriate supervision, where a learner still at school or a student at a further education or training institution gains knowledge of workplace norms and behaviour as part of career guidance and preparation. This would include “work shadowing” and projects such as the “Take a Girl Child to Work” programmes. Such visits do not amount to employment. No stipend or salary is paid.
- **Work placement:** a planned period of work within an organisation which is required as part of the curriculum of a further education or training institution. This may be as part of credit-bearing studies in terms of the SAQA Act or non-credit-bearing studies. A person undergoing a work placement is called a trainee. The placement should be regulated by a contract between the organisation, the institution and the trainee (see also Status of interns in the Legal Guidelines section below. In this category is included the “student interns” as defined in the Public Service Internship Programme.
- **Trainee:** a person undergoing a work placement programme as defined above. (This term is also used within organisations for any person undergoing training or development activities.)
- **Learner and learnership:** as prescribed in the Skills Development Act, learners must be employed by organisations under learnerships registered with the relevant SETA, in a tri-partite contractual relationship between the employer, the learner and an approved training provider.
- **Intern:** A person who is employed at an entry level position in an organisation in a structured programme to gain practical experience in 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 internship and the terms may be used interchangeably.¹ Normally, for reasons discussed below, interns should be paid.

The Public Service Internship Programme requires that the intern should have been unemployed prior to employment as an intern, because one of the main objectives of the programme is to expand work opportunities for unemployed graduates. Depending on the objectives of the employing organisation, this may or may not be a requirement of a private sector or NGO programme.

- **Volunteer:** volunteering is a good way to gain work exposure. However, it is important that an organisation does not exploit this status. Volunteers do not have any obligations to the organisation, they can come and go as they please and are not obliged to carry out any regular or specific tasks. Volunteers, by definition, are not paid. It is recommended that this type of work exposure is used with extreme caution by any organisation other than an NGO. There are insurance, health and safety issues involved.

Legal Guidelines

Status of interns

Since the purpose of internships is to gain practical experience, the intern must carry out work and take responsibility for the completion of assigned tasks. South African case law has established that interns are employees for the purposes of labour law because they are rendering personal service and therefore fall within the definition of “employee”². (Similarly, learners under learnership contracts are employees.)

If they are employees, then they must be paid in terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and any applicable collective agreements.

If the type of exposure the organisation wishes to offer does not extend to real work, then the exposure should be classified as “work exposure” as defined above. In some circumstances, an unpaid “training contract” might be in order, but this should be used only where the trainee is trained in a simulator,

¹The SA Graduate Recruitment Association (SAGRA) will be issuing practice guidelines for Graduate Recruitment and Development Programmes during 2014. SAGRA and SABPP are working closely together to set standards in this area.

² *Mashava v Cuzen & Woods Attorneys*, 1998 19 ILJ 1486 (LC)



training laboratory or workshop, or virtual environment that does not include completion of real tasks in the workplace.

Employment Contracts

Where the internships consist of a tri-partite relationship with the employer, the professional body and the trainee, parties are bound by standard contracts in relation to the training scheme. In addition, a normal employment contract is entered into.

All interns should receive appropriate employment contracts. The period of the internship should be stated (and adhered to). Normally, internship programmes run over a 12 or 24 month period, but this could be shorter for less complex occupations. It is inadvisable to extend the period. Depending on the rules of the organisation's benefit schemes (retirement, medical etc), an intern may or may not be included in such schemes. Normal workplace rules including the disciplinary rules should apply. Being employees, the normal provisions of labour law apply, as applicable to a fixed term contract.

FUNDING OF INTERNSHIPS

Normally, an organisation will pay interns' salaries from its own funds. However, it may be possible to obtain assistance as detailed below.

SETA Funding

Some Sector Education and Training Authorities may consider reimbursing an employer for internships in certain scarce skills categories, as defined by each SETA. For example, the MICT SETA will consider reimbursements for internship programmes from the discretionary (not the PIVOTAL) funds. There is no laid-down amount for any such reimbursement.

Employment Tax Incentive Programme

Late in December 2013, the State President signed into law the Employment Tax Incentive Act 26/2013, which encourages employers to take on young people into additional posts by subsidising their salary over a two year period. This is intended as a first phase, experimental approach to get young people into work and the Department of Finance, which introduced the legislation, has undertaken to review success and consider further measures at a later stage. This programme will apply to internships as much as any other form of employment.

Private sector employers in good standing regarding PAYE may, from 1st January 2014 until December 2017, claim a subsidy for 24 months for any person newly employed from 1st October 2013 onwards, who is between the ages of 18 and 29 and who has a valid South African identify document. Relatives or connections of the employer may not receive the subsidy, neither may employers of domestic workers.



The employee must not earn more than R6 000 per month (and must earn the lesser of R2 000 or the minimum wage as per sectoral determination or collective agreements). The subsidy for the first year consists of a sliding scale depending on the employee's salary/wage, running from nil at a salary of R6000 per month to R 1000 at a salary of R2 001, and 50% of the salary where the salary is less than R2 000 . For the second year, the subsidy is halved.

Employers are prevented from abusing the subsidy by measures preventing payment of the subsidy where the employer has dismissed one or more other employees in order to employ the person in respect of whom the subsidy is claimed. The Minister of Finance has the discretion, if other forms of abuse are identified, to introduce other prevention mechanisms.

The subsidy can be accessed by employers immediately through the deduction of the calculated subsidy from the total amount due to the South African Revenue Service in respect of PAYE for all employees in that month.

BBBEE points

Salaries and training expenses for black interns may be included in the expenditure measured for BBBEE points.³

INTERNS AND SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

An internship programme is very well suited for a small or medium organisation. Personal supervision of the intern is easy, a variety of tasks can be allocated and the scope and purpose of the organisation is easily understood by an intern. For these organisations, the points made in these guidelines should be adapted accordingly. Where a small or medium organisation does not wish to run its own internship programme, interns may be sourced through some of the larger temporary employment providers or other specialist intern organisations.

SETTING UP THE INTERN PROGRAMME

Setting up an internship programme should be approached in the same way as any other project within an organisation. It is very important to align and integrate the internship programme with other relevant HR processes and programmes.

³ http://www.thedti.gov.za/economic_empowerment/docs/code_gud_practice10102013.pdf



Firstly, set up the appropriate governance structure. Some form of oversight committee is recommended, drawn from employee representatives, managers, and, ultimately, interns themselves. Terms of reference of this committee should be drawn up. Then a project manager should be appointed. Normally this will not be a full time position. Research has shown that with this type of project, the most important attribute for the project manager is passion for the subject, in this case that would be passion for developing young people at the start of their careers. Age could be a consideration, as someone not too far distant in age is more likely to appreciate the difficulties of early career development in the prevailing environment. HR and HRD practitioners operating in those parts of the organisation where interns will be employed must be involved with the programme as they will be in a position to make a big difference to the success of the programme.

Then the project manager, and team if there is one, must, in conjunction with the oversight committee, put together the business case for the project, the objectives and the measurable results expected. The business case should be derived from the organisation's talent management strategy and workforce plan, which should identify where pipelines of future skills should be built up. Results should be expressed in various dimensions, including organisational benefits, benefits for the interns, and smooth operation of the programme. The range of stakeholders and their interest(s) in the project must be identified, and a stakeholder communication and management plan prepared. From there the various implementation steps can be identified, sequenced and implemented.

A monitoring and evaluation process must be put in place to check that the programme is working as planned and that the expected results are being delivered. Lessons learned should be documented and used to plan the next stage of implementation. It is likely that the intern programme can be run in annual cycles, so evaluation should be done annually. In addition, it is useful to organise regular (possibly every month or two months) meetings of the interns to discuss how the programme is working and to collect their ideas for improvement.

FINDING THE RIGHT INTERNS

Sourcing and recruitment of interns should follow the normal processes of the organisation. Such processes should ensure that the sourcing is spread widely and not confined to people connected to existing employees/managers. Careful definition of the tasks to be performed and the development support offered (see next section) should be done before embarking on sourcing and recruitment, to ensure that these are correctly and precisely targeted. Poor matching of interns to internship opportunities is frustrating and counter-productive both for the interns and for the organisation.

The opportunity on offer should be clearly specified in terms of:

- The length of the internship, the expected working hours and the start date;
- The main duties the intern is expected to fulfil;



- Salary and benefits (if any);
- Qualification requirements and preferred personal attributes;
- Prospects of future permanent employment.

An appropriate choice must be made between advertising in a restricted way (locally, within a particular university etc.) or more generally. The quality of applicants is determined by the right mix of advertising channels and clear recruitment criteria. Usually, the development of a wider recruitment pool than is normally used will contribute towards bringing in a greater diversity of recruits to the benefit of the organisation. Sources such as the South African Graduate Development Association or university/college careers offices are also useful. Visits to schools by managers and specialist experts from the organisation can also help to develop good sources for future interns. Notification of the internship programme to websites such as the SAQA Career Service and appropriate SETAs can also help target recruitment appropriately.

The assessment processes used should take account of the type of recruits being sought. Assessment processes focused on learning potential and attitude rather than existing skills are more suitable for entry level recruits. Employability and trainability factors to look for include problem-solving ability, teamwork, communication, enthusiasm and commitment to values aligned to your organisation. For some internships, the quality of the matric, degree or diploma gained may be of relevance, but it should not be ignored that some students obtained their matric, degree or diploma under severely disadvantaged conditions. The interview process could also include some career guidance counselling because very often recruits have not had good career guidance earlier in their lives.

The selection process should include interviews (either in a panel or in individual successive interviews) by managers who will be responsible for developing the interns. It is not recommended that interns be “owned” by the HR department and deployed around the organisation. A lack of line manager involvement usually translates to a lack of interest in developing the intern.

STRUCTURED DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNS

Induction

In addition to the normal induction/orientation process that employees go through, interns should undergo a more intensive process aimed at equipping them with the understanding and skills to meet workplace requirements, particularly in terms of attendance, dress, communication and self-management. Such “life skills” training can either be carried out by internal HRD staff or by specialist agencies.



The HR practitioner responsible for each intern should ensure through the line manager that a workstation is prepared for each intern and that he/she is provided with the necessary tools, equipment and information.

Allocation of tasks and responsibilities

The internship should be structured to expose the intern to:

- a sufficient range of experiences that he /she can appreciate the scope of the occupation or profession in which he/she hopes to develop;
- typical career paths within the relevant occupation or profession;
- tasks that can be safely completed so that performance standards can be developed;
- a diversity of tasks/projects that give the intern the opportunity to demonstrate personal strengths and attributes such as problem-solving, teamwork, attention to detail, customer orientation and so on. Certainly, menial tasks such as filing can be allocated, but should not be full-time and should have a specific purpose in mind.
- A detailed work programme should be in writing, covering the full period of the internship. It is not sufficient to specify, for example, “2 weeks job shadowing in xx department”. In this example, the type of exposures for the job shadowing and the objectives should be specified. The work programme could be developed using the above list of bullet points as the headings against which specific assignments are allocated. The work programme will need to be flexible as well, to allow for organisational issues, new projects that come up, or changes in career intentions of the intern.

It is preferable that the work programme be structured as a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE), signed off by line managers as the internship progresses. The review and signing off should take place regularly (weekly is recommended at first, then monthly). This can then function as a performance management tool. The PoE is also then available for a variety of purposes including references for future jobs, evidence for professional registration, or preparation for further qualifications.

The work programme may, and often will, involve rotation through different departments or sections of the organisation. In such cases, it is very important that at least one person (preferably two, being an HR practitioners and a mentor – see below) retains an overall connection to the intern throughout the internship.

Mentoring and coaching

For the purposes of this document, **mentoring** is defined as a process by which a more experienced employee develops and maintains a relationship of trust and support for the intern to assist personal and professional development. **Coaching** is defined as support of various kinds for the development of specific skills.

Interns will probably benefit from the assignment of one “buddy”, close in age and hierarchy, plus one “mentor”, being a more senior person in the occupation or profession. The “buddy” may change as the



intern rotates departments, but the mentor should remain constant as far as possible. Mentoring of interns should take place in line with processes in place in the organisation in terms of other mentoring programmes if they exist. If not, guidelines on mentoring programmes may be accessed from SABPP.

Interns will also benefit from group development sessions, held at regular intervals, and designed to supplement and continue the “life skills” and professional development of the intern. Subjects such as professional ethics and organisational values would be suitable for such sessions. Where an intern is following an occupation or profession in which there is an approved professional body, such bodies can be approached to support these group sessions. Group sessions could also be used to organise visits to relevant institutions, or appropriate exposures outside the workplace such as customers’ premises.

Various persons may be assigned to coach the intern, either formally or informally, over the internship period.

Premature conclusion of the internship

There are several possible reasons for a premature conclusion of the internship.

- The organisation may undergo changes which make it impossible to continue to offer the development opportunity originally intended. Whilst this situation should be avoided if at all possible, if it does occur, then discussions should be held with the intern on alternative steps to be taken. For example, maybe the organisation can make arrangements with an associated company, supplier, customer etc. for another internship. For labour law purposes, this would constitute a dismissal for operational reasons and the appropriate steps must be taken.
- The intern may change his/her career plans, or personal circumstances may change. This should be picked up in discussions with the mentor and/or HR and an appropriate course of action agreed on with the intern. In terms of the employment contract, the intern should be able to give notice. If the intern has handled the situation in a mature way, a premature conclusion should not be taken as a “black mark” on his/her record. Rather, he/she should be supported for facing up to and taking appropriate action as life changes.
- The intern may not perform to the required standard, either through misconduct or incapacity. This should be dealt with at an early state through the normal corrective processes of discipline.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE INTERNS

It is important to afford the intern fair notice of what the future might bring for him or her. A “next steps” interview should therefore be held with each intern by the programme manager about 3 months before the end of the internship. The various possibilities should be discussed and a written agreement concluded about what the intern will do and what the organisation will do to prepare for and support the next steps, particularly where the organisation cannot, for whatever reason, offer a permanent position. For example, time off may be agreed to allow the intern to attend interviews for future permanent



positions outside the organisation. In addition, training sessions can be run on job-seeking skills such as cv preparation and interview skills. The departing intern can also be referred to the labour centres of the Department of Labour and/or the various organisations which assist young people to set up in business for themselves.

The internship should then be formally concluded, in an interview with the responsible HR practitioner and at least one of the line managers who has been supervising the intern. The interview should cover:

- What has the intern learned and how has he/she developed over the internship;
- How well he/she has met the objectives set at the beginning of or during the internship;
- What have been the proudest achievements;
- What projects have been completed or contributed to;
- In what ways is the intern better prepared for the job market after completing this internship;
- How well in general he/she has performed;
- What are his/her main strengths and development areas?

A separate exit interview should be conducted in confidence and in accordance with the normal exit interview process for the organisation, to gather feedback on perceptions of the employment experience and the organisation.

An appropriate reference document should be prepared, ready for the intern to take on departure. The reference document should summarise the PoE, showing what the intern has learned, achieved, developed and undertaken and what personal strengths have been demonstrated or developed during the internship.

Where the organisation has not been able to offer the intern a permanent position, it is worth maintaining contact with the departing intern. This will enable data to be collected on the impact of the internship which can be valuable for the organisation and for the profession. It can also allow the organisation to develop a body of “alumni” which can be a useful and cost-effective recruitment sources for the future.

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Internship programmes must be properly based in strategy, properly designed and implemented with professionalism and passion. They require the investment of time and money, but the return on that investment can be multiple over both the short and long term.

These guidelines were prepared by members of the SABPP office with the support of various members of the SABPP committees. Useful reference documents included the CIPD Guide for Employers: Internships that Work, and the Public Service Internship Programme Step by Step Guide. The assistance of Neil



Coetzer of Cowan Harper Attorneys in compiling the legal guidelines is gratefully acknowledged, but the responsibility for the guidelines lies with the SABPP.

All HR practitioners and other readers are encouraged to distribute these guidelines freely in the interests of promoting internship programmes.



ABOUT THE SABPP

Mission: To establish, direct and sustain a high level of professionalism and ethical conduct in human resources and people practices.

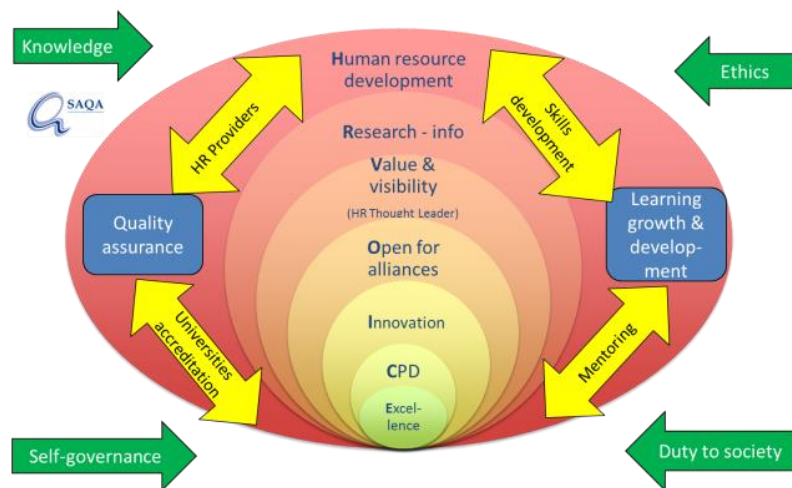
The SABPP links the achievement of quality to equity and the fostering of innovation and diversity.

Our values:

OBJECTIVITY | FAIRNESS | CONSISTENCY | INTEGRITY

Our strategy – HR VOICE

New Model: HR Voice for Professionals





CONTACT US

Enquiries about these Professional Guidelines can be made to marius@sabpp.co.za or to hrri@sabpp.co.za.

Not yet registered with the SA Board for People Practices (SABPP)?

Join now by applying for professional registration.

Email: professional@sabpp.co.za



INTERNSHIP CHECKLIST

1. Setting up the programme

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1.1. Legal requirements have been checked and appropriate contracts of employment templates prepared | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.2 The business case has been researched and documented, with measurable results defined | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.3 The project manager and governance structure(s) have been set up | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.4 Stakeholders have been identified and communication and management plans set in place | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.6 A monitoring and evaluation process is in place and adhered to | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Finding the right interns

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 2.1 The duties and selection criteria are documented | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.2 Appropriate sourcing channels have been explored and selected to create a diverse recruitment pool | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.3 Assessment specialists have been consulted to set up appropriate talent identification processes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.4 Interview processes have been set up | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Structured development for the interns

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 3.1 Extended induction has been set up for the intern(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.2 The workplace has been prepared for the intern(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.3 A detailed work programme has been prepared for each intern | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.4 Mentors and coaches have been set up for each intern | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.5 A performance review process has been set up for each intern, structured around a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) and is monitored for implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> |



3.6 A process is in place for premature conclusion of the internship

☐

4. Next steps for the intern

4.1 A preparation interview has been set up for each intern 3 months before the end of the contract

☐

4.2 An agreement is in place as to next steps

☐

4.3 Job seeking preparation training is conducted if required

☐

4.4 A formal internship conclusion interview is set up and recorded

☐

4.5 A reference document has been prepared for each departing intern, based on the PoE

☐

4.6 A confidential exit interview is set up and conducted

☐

4.7 A data-base of “alumni” interns is set up and maintained to track their future development

☐



SAMPLE INTERN AGREEMENT

Note: This should be separate from, and in addition to, the normal employment contract, which should be drawn up as a fixed term contract, with appropriate and legally compliant conditions of service.

INTRODUCTION

xx (employer) is employing xx (intern) for a period of xx as an intern (or other title agreed by organisation, such as trainee).

If applicable: This internship is conducted with a view to the intern gaining the work experience necessary to complete his/her qualification of xx.

WORK PROGRAMME DURING THE INTERNSHIP

Depending on the programme planned, an example clause could be:

You will be assigned on a rotating basis to the departments listed below and during your period in each department, you will report to the person named in the list below:

You will be given exposures as set out in the detailed work programme attached (or to be drawn up) and you will be expected to maintain a Portfolio of Evidence of completion of assignments on the format provided.

We will endeavour to implement the work programme as planned, but it may be that changes will be introduced due to operational requirements.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you carry out your work assignments diligently and that you report to xx (HR practitioner responsible for the intern(s)) should you encounter any problems or not be occupied for any reason.

YOUR MENTOR/SUPERVISOR

You will be allocated a mentor within the first week of your internship. It is your responsibility to set up an appointment with this mentor within a week to agree on how you will work together and what your expectations are of each other.

CONCLUSION OF THE INTERNSHIP

We will discuss with you xx months before the conclusion of the internship what the next steps are. We emphasise that you should not form expectations of continued employment. You should rather concentrate, during the internship, in acquiring as many skills as possible and becoming as employable as possible.

SIGNATURES OF INTERN AND EMPLOYER

DATE OF SIGNATURES

[illegible]