As an employer, there are a variety of ways you can offer experiential learning opportunities to students, including through internships, micro-internships, simulations, and volunteering. This guide will provide you with guidance on these experiential learning programs along with how to offer these opportunities.

Internships and experiential learning opportunities create a unique intersection of exposure and learning for both the employer and student. Employers can build their talent pipeline through internships as almost 60% of interns convert into full-time employees with the organization where they completed their internship. Additionally, former interns are 15% more likely to still be at the company 5 years on versus non-intern hires. These benefits, among many others, are highlighted in this guide.

WGU’s Employer Relations team can support your organization in recruiting and hosting events to increase exposure to your company. For additional information about experiential learning or the Employer Relations team at WGU, please check out page 14 of this handbook.
# List of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to create an internship program</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to ensure a successful program</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities by role</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic credit for internships</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer legal requirements for internships</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to post internships on Handshake</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual internship requirements</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an internship for an employee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-Internships with Parker Dewey</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations with Forage</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Shadowing</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGU Employer Relations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential learning allows students to gain skills and experience by learning through doing. There are many different types of experiential learning opportunities that can support a student in their professional and academic development.

What are the benefits of experiential learning?

Experiential learning has many benefits for employers including:

- Strengthening your organization’s workforce by tapping into the support of students through internships, micro-internships, volunteering, apprenticeships, fellowships, and many other opportunities.
- Developing a talent pipeline with potential future employees.
- Gaining new and diverse perspectives to solve challenges.
- Increasing organizational productivity by giving your employees more bandwidth to focus on other projects while having additional support.
What is an internship?

An internship is a type of experiential learning that offers practical work related to a student’s field of study or career interest to help them develop their professional skills.

Internships enable students to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom in a hands-on, practical work environment. Students will develop career competencies and knowledge that will contribute to their overall professional success. They will also have the opportunity to expand their professional network.

Prior to the internship, employers must do the following:

- Define learning objectives and goals for the intern.
- Identify an internship supervisor to provide support to the intern throughout the student’s experience.
- Develop a job description for the internship that clearly articulates the responsibilities, goals, and expectations for the internship.

What is not considered an internship?

WGU will not approve the following types of internships on Handshake:

- A position that replaces the work that a regular employee performs
- Commissioned based businesses
- Opportunities where the employer requires the student to pay a fee for participation
- Opportunities that require a student to establish their own independent business to sell products, services, or recruit others to set up their own businesses
- Opportunities supervised by a family member
- Telemarketing or sales positions
- Home-based businesses
How to create an internship program:

Step 1: Identify your organization’s needs and goals
- Be sure to consider the needs of your organization and whether an intern can fulfill those needs.
- What are the daily or weekly tasks and goals for an intern?
- Do you need support on an ongoing basis or is this a one-time project?
- Are there projects that have been on hold that an intern can complete?
- Does your company have an employee that can supervise and support the intern during the internship?
- How will the intern be included in company trainings and meetings?

Step 2: Identify internship responsibilities and compensation
- Articulate the responsibilities for the intern to include in a job description.
- What professional experience or academic requirements are required?
- Will the internship be on-site or virtual?
  - If the internship is on-site, do you have a workspace and equipment for the intern to work?
  - If the internship is virtual, what equipment, systems, and resources will the intern need?
  - For more information about virtual internships, see page 10 of this handbook.
- Will the internship be paid or unpaid?
  - WGU only promotes paid internships in compliance with the National Association of Colleges and Employer’s (NACE) recommendations.

Step 3: Ensure compliance with Department of Labor requirements
- The U.S. Department of Labor has outlined requirements to determine whether an intern is entitled to minimum wages and overtime pay at for-profit employers. Be sure to carefully assess whether the internship should be paid. In general, the Department of Labor suggests that interns are employees if they do work that is primarily for the company's benefit, rather than for the educational benefit of the student.

Step 4: Recruit and hire interns
- Create a job description for the intern position and post the opportunity on Handshake 2-4 months prior to hiring the intern(s).
- Begin reviewing applications and make an official offer!
How to ensure your internship program is successful?

Ensuring Intern Success
To ensure intern success, be sure to consider the following:

- Include the intern in an onboarding orientation and any trainings.
- Provide opportunities for the intern to develop their skill set by participating and completing a variety of tasks and projects.
- Provide space for the intern to ask questions to learn and grow.
- Select a site supervisor that will actively support, encourage, and motivate the intern.
- Contribute to the intern’s professional development by offering consistent feedback.

Program Evaluation
At the end of the internship, offering an exit interview or survey can provide an opportunity to gain feedback to improve the internship program. It is also important to assess:

- Did the internship meet the goals of the organization?
- Did the intern meet or exceed the expectations and goals of the internship?
- Did the site supervisor provide adequate support for the intern?
- Did the intern transition into full-time positions with the organization?
- Do any updates need to be made to the job description?
- Based on feedback from the intern and employees, what improvements can be made?

Offering Paid Internships
By offering paid internships, your organization will attract top tier candidates. Additionally, by paying interns, you remove the financial barrier for many students to participate in an internship. Many students are unable to participate in unpaid internships due to the financial strain.

WGU firmly supports paid internships and only approves paid internship opportunities on Handshake. For additional information about the importance of paid internships, please visit this website from NACE.
Responsibilities by Role

**Intern:**
- Apply and submit an application to the internship opportunity.
- Determine whether academic credit can be earned for the internship experience by contacting their academic department.
- Communicate professionally and meet or exceed the required expectations throughout the internship.
- Ensure access to reliable internet and a computer as needed for virtual internships.
- Remain receptive to feedback and identify ways to contribute to positively to the organization.
- Contact WGU if any issues arise.

**Employer & Site Supervisor:**
- Identify clearly defined learning objectives and goals for the intern.
- Provide an orientation, training, mentoring, and supervision for the intern.
- Support the intern in meeting the required expectations and goals.
- Provide feedback to support the intern in their professional development.
- Offer weekly meetings to ensure the intern is supported.
- Ensure compliance with the Department of Labor’s FSLA standards.
- Complete any evaluations required for the intern.
- Contact WGU if any issues arise.

**WGU Internship & Experiential Learning Manager:**
- Support the intern and employer in the event any issues arise.
- Collaborate with employers to increase the number of experiential learning opportunities available to students.
- Promote internship opportunities to WGU students.

During the internship...

If you encounter any issues during the internship, please reach out to WGU’S Career and Professional Development via phone or email. Our office will collaborate with you and the intern in identifying a path forward.
Can a WGU student receive academic credit?

WGU students are encouraged to reach out to their academic department to determine if they are able to receive academic credit for their internship.

If the student can receive academic credit for their internship, there may be additional forms and documents that are required for approval of the internship and an evaluation after the experience. Additionally, WGU does not have a certain requirement for the length of the internship, however, for students earning academic credit, there may be a requirement for the number of hours worked.

Employer Legal Requirements

According to NACE, best practices for employers regarding legal compliance include:

- Employers must comply with all federal and state immigration laws when employing interns including the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- Employers must comply with state or federal laws regarding underage persons and must comply with all child labor standards, and age limitations which differ from state to state.
- If the intern is paid, the employer must provide workers compensation and liability insurance in accordance with state law.
- The organization must comply with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, disability, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, religion, creed, and/or age.
- Employers should not discriminate based on age and must follow The Age Discrimination in Employment Act.
- Employers must comply with all federal and state immigration laws when employing interns.
How to post internships & more on Handshake:

Handshake is the online career platform where employers can post jobs, internships, volunteer opportunities, and fellowships. Additionally, you can view and register for events and directly contact students and alumni about opportunities with your organization. All WGU students and alumni across all academic programs have access to Handshake. WGU has over 170,000 active students and over 360,000 alumni.

To post your internship opportunity:

- Create a Handshake account and request to connect with WGU.
- To post your internship opportunity on Handshake, or any experiential learning opportunity, please visit this website as it walks you through the steps of adding an internship or job to the job board.
- Under the Basic Information section, you will have the opportunity to select that this is an internship opportunity.

If you would like to explore additional ways to promote your position, please contact WGU’s Employer Relations team at hirewgu@wgu.edu.
Employer Virtual Internship Requirements

To ensure a successful internship for both the employer and intern, be sure to integrate the following into the virtual internship experience for the intern:

- Provide an orientation for the intern during their onboarding period.
- Establish expectations with the intern regarding daily and weekly responsibilities.
- Identify accountability measures to ensure the intern meets expectations and requirements for role.
- The organization’s internship site supervisor must provide the student with regular training, supervision, mentoring, and feedback.
- Any costs associated with providing adequate technology for the intern must be covered or reimbursed by the employer.
- Meet weekly with the intern to provide feedback, answer questions, and ensure the student is aware of upcoming deadlines.
- The organization should include the virtual intern in regular operations as much as possible; for example, including them in face-to-face opportunities such as company meetings or client visits.

How to create an internship for a current employee:

We encourage students to collaborate with their employer to determine whether they can intern with the organization where they are employed, particularly if the student is transitioning to a new industry. For instance, if the employed student currently works in the HR department and is studying accounting, the employer can permit the employee to intern in the accounting department to gain experience.

The employer will determine whether the employee will complete the internship hours during or outside of their typical work schedule. Additionally, the employer and employee will determine the number of hours per week as well as whether it is a paid opportunity.

Please be aware that 50% of the duties in the internship must differ from that of their typical, full-time position with the company.
What are micro-internships?

Micro-internships by Parker Dewey are short-term, virtual, paid projects offered by a variety of companies including Fortune 100 and start-up companies across many industries. These companies have identified short-term projects (10-40 hours) where they need support from interns.

What are the benefits?

- Find on-demand, professional project assistance from students and recent graduates to provide support on a variety of projects.
- Easy, cost-effective way to increase brand recognition and identify potential candidates for open roles from a diverse candidate pool.
- Over 80% of students participating in micro-internships are from underrepresented backgrounds in the workforce.
- Build your talent pipeline of students and recent graduates from across the U.S. from a variety of academic programs.
- Parker Dewey manages payroll and administrative responsibilities.

How to create a micro-internship:

- **Step 1:** Create your free company account on Parker Dewey here.
- **Step 2:** Post your micro-internship project that is 10-40 hours in length and has a specific deliverable upon completion.
- **Step 3:** Review the diverse pool of applicants and select the candidate for the micro-internship.
- **Step 4:** Once you select your micro-intern, Parker Dewey will send you an invoice.
- **Step 5:** Provide the micro-intern the resources and information necessary for the project.
What is Forage?

WGU has partnered with Forage to offer simulations from a multitude of companies and industries that allow students and graduates to learn more about a company and utilize their skill set in a simulation to gain experience. Throughout the simulations, they will develop and expand their skills.

The simulations allow students to learn about the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities that replicate the typical work for a variety of companies. Companies that offer simulations through Forage include JPMorgan, Lululemon, Citi, General Electric, Red Bull, PepsiCo, Walmart, and many more!

How can Forage benefit your company?

By completing a Forage simulation, students demonstrate an interest in learning more about your organization and a commitment to further developing their skill set. Additionally, other benefits include:

- Surface motivated candidates for the right roles.
- Forage candidates are 2x more likely to accept an offer than a non-Forage candidate.
- By using Forage as a trusted source for hiring, recruiters saved 62% of their time throughout the recruitment process.
- Advance inclusivity in your hiring process and access a diverse talent pool.

How to create a simulation?

To learn more about Forage and how it can benefit your organization, visit Forage’s website.
Volunteering

Volunteering can bolster your organization by offering extra assistance to fulfill its mission. It also allows individuals to make a valuable contribution to an organization in their community by donating their time or money for a philanthropic cause. Be sure your volunteering program meets the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Benefits of a Volunteer Program

- **Raise Awareness**: Volunteers often help to promote and bring awareness to your brand by sharing information about their experience with their network.
- **Increase Efficiency**: By utilizing a network of volunteers, your organization can increase its impact by expanding the number of projects completed.
- **Talent Pipeline**: Through volunteering, you can identify future candidates for open positions with your organization.

How to post volunteer opportunities?

Please refer to page 7 of this guide for steps on how to add your volunteer opportunity to Handshake, WGU’s online career platform.
What is Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is a one-on-one learning opportunity for an individual to observe the daily tasks, responsibilities, culture, and job expectations for a specific job.

These opportunities include internal employees shadowing their colleagues or external individuals shadowing at an organization to learn more about an organization, department, or role.

Benefits of Job Shadowing:

- Create a potential talent pipeline decreasing recruiting costs.
- Share more information about your company to the potential candidate so that they can ensure the organization and position meet their career needs.
- Increase awareness regarding the diverse needs of potential new hires.
- Support students in ensuring they are selecting an industry that meets their professional demands.

How to post job shadowing opportunities?

Oftentimes, individuals interested in job shadow will reach out directly to the organization where they want to complete a job shadow.

If you would like to promote a job shadow opportunity with your organization, please reach out to WGU’s Employer Relations team at hirewgu@wgu.edu.
Employer Engagement at WGU

**WGU can support employers in a variety of ways...**

**RECRUITING STRATEGY**
Connect with our team for personalized guidance on how to connect with WGU students and alumni!

**HANDSHAKE SUPPORT**
Our team uses Handshake to connect students and alumni to employer opportunities. We also provide employers with targeted marketing to students and graduates through the platform.

**EVENTS**
Our team collaborates with employers to host several types of events including
- Information Sessions
- Professional Development Workshops
- Panel Discussions
- Hiring Events
- ... & more!

Our students are the **future** of your business

WGU is a nationally recognized, nonprofit, online university featuring a variety of fully accredited programs in our School of Business, School of Technology, Leavitt School of Health, and School of Education. Our students are located in all 50 states.

Our degree programs are tied to industry demand and are updated frequently to ensure students are gaining workforce-related knowledge and skills.

Contact our team today at HireWGU@wgu.edu for personalized recruiting assistance!