

# GRAD Guide to Finding an Internship

## OVERVIEW

Internships are **short-term professional experiences** with organizations. Most commonly, they are opportunities to build skills, gain experience, and develop your network in a specific field. Even for graduate students, internships have become a critical **building block** of resumes for positions in industry, nonprofits, and government. This is because hiring managers want to see that you applied your graduate training in a practical manner and that you have experience in the environment in which you seek to work after graduate school. Even in academia, where internships are less integral, hands-on experiences can be a useful way to build complementary skills in administration or advising. While much of the advice presented in this guide is broadly applicable, it is intended particularly for graduate students in research-based programs.

A **good** graduate-level internship allows you to (1) develop skills that align with your professional goals, (2) dig deeper into your interests, and (3) apply your academic training in real-world contexts. The best internships will provide you with dedicated mentorship from an experienced professional at your host organization. Ideally your internship will last long enough that you accumulate meaningful experience (we have found that internships of 250 hours are ideal). Internships should not interfere with your academic goals or require you to stretch yourself in ways that are not reasonable (for example, taking on debt or delaying graduation).

**UChicago** offers multiple resources for locating, applying for, and funding internships. If you are part of a program with dedicated career resources, such as the Harris School of Public Policy Career Development Office or the Financial Mathematics Career Development Office, make use of these resources. A list of campus resources can be found on page 7. **UChicagoGRAD's** flagship program, the Graduate Global Impact (GGI) Internship Program, supports you in identifying and applying for internship opportunities on campus and around the world. Please refer to page 6 for more information.

## DO I NEED AN INTERNSHIP?

It depends. Some **Master's programs** at UChicago, especially two-year ones, encourage their students to complete an internship during the summer after their first year. These opportunities are important to build experience aligned with the training the program provides. If you are in a one-year Master's program, an internship could be valuable for you if you have limited experience in the field you are targeting, and if your research of the field suggests that an internship is needed to get your foot in the door. Your dedicated career advisor can help you figure out the value of an internship for your specific situation and goals.

Internships for **PhD students** are also becoming more common, and some organizations have designed internships specifically for PhD students. These internships offer project-based experiences appropriate for the skills that PhD students bring and allow you to use your academic training in a different environment. If you are looking to build careers in industry, nonprofit and government in particular, internships can build a bridge between graduate school and a target profession and serve as an important signal for your commitment to a non-professoriate career. They can also be a component of a parallel strategy to build a second, non-professoriate option. Please connect with your UChicagoGRAD career advisor to discuss whether an internship could be right for you.

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## WHERE CAN I FIND INTERNSHIPS?

- Search for job postings on the websites of companies and organizations of interest.
- Find job postings on sites such as [LinkedIn](#), [Glassdoor](#), and [Indeed](#). Use key words and filters to find postings of interest to you, for example “data science intern in San Francisco” or “writing intern in Chicago.”
- Search industry and location specific job sites, such as [Built In Chicago](#) or [Idealist](#). Many job sites have check boxes for “internships” which make the search process more straightforward.
- Explore the [UChicagoGRAD job board](#) and, if applicable, that of your dedicated UChicago career service office.
- Consider whether creating your own internship under UChicagoGRAD's [GGI Pitch Program](#) is an option for you (refer to page 6 of this guide).
- Look into other campus resources, such as the [Institute of Politics Internship Program](#), [Civic Engagement's Student Civic Engagement Pathfinder](#), [MyChoice externships](#), or [Polsky fellowships](#).
- Networking can be a route for securing an internship. Refer to the information on page 3 to learn more.

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## WHEN DOES AN INTERNSHIP MAKE MOST SENSE?

If you are in a **Master's program**, the question of timing may be straightforward. In two-year programs, the summer after the first year lends itself to building professional experience, which you can then present on your resume when you apply for full-time paid positions in the following academic year. In one-year Master's programs, often the only option can be to do an internship at the end of the program. This is the case as course requirements during the academic year may not afford time for an internship position.

As a **PhD student**, the choice of when to do an internship can be complex. Depending on your program and target field, both summer and academic year options (full or part-time) may be available, and it might be possible to do an internship in more than one year. To decide what makes sense for you, reflect on your goals and how an internship fits in. Is it something you are drawn to out of general interest, or something needed to make an argument about your professional fit for a position? Is the opportunity unique or is it one that may present itself in the future again? How does this internship fit in with your academic goals for the year? When does your program allow you to do an internship? We find that internships for PhD students often are most valuable in the later years of the program (and some opportunities are not open to earlier PhD students). This is the case because your professional interests tend to be clearer and the connection you build to professionals more directly applicable to a job search at the end of your PhD program. Your UChicagoGRAD advisor can help you untangle these and other considerations.

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## DO I NEED TO NETWORK?

In nonprofits, industry and government, there is a high premium placed on communication and relationship-building skills. In academia, too, it is important to build relationships with professionals who have shared vocational or research interests. If you are keen on doing an internship, making connections with professionals in this area will give you valuable insight into the overall field and better understanding what type of internship is right for you. It might even help you secure an internship, especially if the internship you have in mind is one that could be funded through UChicagoGRAD's GGI Pitch Programs (see page 6). How, then, might you get started?

- **Arrange informational interviews:** search for alumni working at organizations and companies that interest you using the [alumni directory](#), [Wisr](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Beyond alumni, explore the profiles of employees that are sometimes published on individual organization websites. If you are interested in interning with a larger company, use LinkedIn to search for employees in teams of interest. For more information on informational interviews (and for sample outreach messages), see this [UChicagoGRAD presentation](#).
- **Make connections via on-campus career events:** attend events such as the annual [GRADUCon](#) career exploration conference, employer information sessions, and look out for relevant treks and career conversations organized by UChicagoGRAD. Visit [GRAD Gargoyle](#) for event listings.
- **Twitter and LinkedIn:** follow the accounts of professionals whose work fascinates you. Besides commentary on developments in a work field, individuals will frequently share opportunities including internship ones.

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## WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

When to apply depends on the field and on whether you're targeting a summer or academic-year internship. Selective industry summer internships, for example in finance and consulting, open applications in the Fall prior. More broadly, many other summer internships will be advertised between January and March. There may still be opportunities in the late Spring, but they are more likely limited to smaller companies and start-ups.

A good rule of thumb for summer internships is to start thinking about what type of internships you may be interested in in the beginning of the academic year prior to doing an internship. Set up a meeting with your dedicated career advisor to discuss what makes sense for you.

Academic year internships tend to have more flexible timing and may be advertised about three to six months before they start. They are often part-time. Keep in mind that academic year internships often result from networking, which contributes to more flexible timing. If you are interested in doing an internship during the academic year, plan on speaking with professionals in areas of interest to see if it is feasible to find or create an internship that works for your professional needs, as well as those of the internship host.

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Below you will find a selection of some of the graduate-specific and PhD internships UChicago students have applied for and secured. Many other similar opportunities exist.

## SELECTED GRADUATE-SPECIFIC INTERNSHIPS\*\*

Company	Sample Areas of Internship Focus
<a href="#">Amgen</a>	R&D, Global Supply Chain
<a href="#">Feeding America</a>	Research
<a href="#">Art Institute of Chicago</a>	Public Engagement, Photography and Media
<a href="#">The Field Museum</a>	Science, Public Engagement
<a href="#">Brookings Institution</a>	Research, Communications
<a href="#">BCG Gamma</a>	Data Science Consulting
<a href="#">TikTok</a>	Data Science & Engineering, Content Strategy
<a href="#">CCS Fundraising</a>	Consulting

## SELECTED PHD-SPECIFIC INTERNSHIPS\*

Company	Sample Areas of Internship Focus
<a href="#">Google</a>	Data Science, User Experience, Software Engineering
<a href="#">IBM</a>	Human Behavior, Data Science
<a href="#">PayPal</a>	Risk Management, Software Engineering, Data Analytics
<a href="#">JP Morgan</a>	Business Modeling
<a href="#">Meta</a>	Data Science, User Experience, Research, Machine Learning
<a href="#">Microsoft</a>	Research, AI, Cognition & Speech
<a href="#">The Urban Institute</a>	Research, User Experience
<a href="#">RAND Corporation</a>	Research

\* Internships for Master's students may also exist at these organizations.

\*\*If you are a PhD student you may still apply.

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## CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In most cases, it is possible for international students to do an internship. However, it is likely that you will need to apply for authorization before undertaking an internship. To better understand what is required, refer to UChicagoGRAD's [International Graduate Student Guide to the Job Search in the United States](#) which discusses F-1 and J-1 International Student Work Authorization Options in the U.S. Please note that each individual situation may vary. If you have questions, please contact [UChicagoGRAD](#) or the [Office of International Affairs](#) for additional guidance.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Do internships lead to full-time jobs at companies?

Sometimes. Some companies explicitly advertise that their internship programs are ways to find talent for full-time positions, and it is something you can ask about during the interview process. In general, it is wise to go into an internship knowing that it will not necessarily lead to a full-time position at that particular company as you can't assume that that company is looking to hire at that time, even if they like you.

### How competitive are internship programs? Should I apply for a large number?

The number of applicants for internship programs will vary widely depending on the field and organization. Internships at prestigious organizations typically will receive several hundred applications. As such, you want to apply to more than a couple of programs. Having said that, the quality of your applications will be more important than the number of applications you submit. It is in this context that connections with professionals matter as well. Having someone to mention in a cover letter or who may be able to refer you for an internship position can make a difference. Also, think about UChicago funding opportunities that allow you to create your own internship with an organization and, in turn, may open some new doors.

### How are internships compensated? Does it ever make sense to take an unpaid internship?

It depends. In industry, it is common that companies will offer compensation for internships. It's trickier in academia, nonprofits and government. If you are interested in internships that may not be compensated, look into UChicago's funding options (see pages 6 and 7). Under some limited circumstances, it can make sense to take an unpaid internship. Please discuss this choice with your dedicated career advisor.

### Can I negotiate an internship offer?

If you hold an offer for a paid internship, it can be possible to negotiate the offer, especially if you have multiple offers. If you have an offer for an unpaid internship, it may be worth enquiring about compensation, too. Connect with your career advisor for guidance for your situation.

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## DON'T GET CAUGHT UP ON LABELS

Opportunities for gaining experience exist that are not labeled "internships." These include externships, volunteer, part-time, and some professional fellowship positions (refer to the [GRAD Professional Fellowships with the U.S. Government handout](#)). If these options fit your professional goals, they are just as valuable as an opportunity labeled "internship."

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## UCHICAGOGRAD'S GRAD GLOBAL IMPACT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

UChicagoGRAD supports you in creating internship opportunities on campus and around the world. Each year, the GGI internship program enables students to pursue meaningful, skill-building internships that make use of their graduate training. UChicagoGRAD offers two GGI internship options:

- **GGI Pitch.** [Create your own customized “pitch” internship](#) with an organization that otherwise could not afford to pay an intern. A limited number of \$6,000 stipends will be awarded to students for these internship projects. Pitch internship deadlines occur each year in mid-February. PhD students also can apply for academic-year pitch internships each July.
- **GGI Final-Year PhD.** [Design an internship project or pursue a pre-established internship](#) in academia, industry, nonprofits, or government in the year you graduate with your PhD or directly after you receive your PhD. Stipends of \$6,000 will be awarded to eligible projects and are available on a rolling basis.

Review the infographic below to determine which GGI program is right for you. Then, [schedule a meeting](#) with a UChicagoGRAD career advisor to discuss your internship options or contact Kathrin Kranz (kranz@uchicago.edu).

### The GRAD Global Impact Pitch Program



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## NEXT STEPS AND ADVICE

- Build your professional network by connecting with professionals at companies or organizations of interest.
- Do your research to get a better understanding of the opportunities available and pay close attention to deadlines for different internship programs.
- Depending on the type of experience you are seeking, consider opportunities not labeled “internships” such as voluntary positions on campus and beyond.

**You see a suitable internship posting and decide to apply.** Tailor your resume and write a strong cover letter. Need help or inspiration? See UChicagoGRAD’s guides focused on [resumes](#) and [cover letters](#). Articulate clearly the ways in which your work and personal interests align with the internship position and demonstrate that you are knowledgeable of the employer.

**You receive an invitation to interview.** Congratulations! To prepare for the interview, check out UChicagoGRAD’s [GRADTalk resources](#). You can participate in a workshop to prepare for your interview or set up a 1:1 [advising appointment](#) to practice.

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## UCHICAGO INTERNSHIP CAMPUS RESOURCES

### Internship Programs

*Please refer to page 6 to learn more about UChicagoGRAD’s Internship Program.*

*Please note that the programs below do not represent an exhaustive list of on-campus opportunities.*

- The [University of Chicago Institute of Politics](#) provides a database of public service internships available to UChicago students. In addition, you can apply for \$2500 stipends to support a public service-related internship.
- The University of Chicago Civic Engagement offers the [Student Civic Engagement Pathfinder](#) which provides various nonprofit and government internship options on and off-campus.
- The [Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#) offers experiential opportunities, such as [Polsky I-Corps](#) and the [Science Innovation Fellows Program](#)
- [myCHOICE](#) programming offers [externships](#) designed for PhD students and postdocs (limited opportunities for Mx students may exist)

### Program Career Offices

*If your program has its own career office, please make sure to connect with them during your internship exploration and application process. Your career office may have additional resources available.*