

Reference Guide
for Employers

Onboarding and Integrating Interns



Written by

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Introduction

As a company or as an organization, you will likely have the opportunity to onboard one or more interns on your work team. By doing so, you contribute to the training of the next generation, while also having the opportunity to meet a workforce need and to benefit from the skills of your interns.

Although the term “intern” is generally associated with youth vocational training and education, such as DEP (Secondary School Vocational Diploma), CEGEP (in Québec) and university; there are different types of interns and internships. These include **newcomers** to Québec who want to gain their first work experience here through an internship, **individuals who want to develop practical workplace competencies**; **adults in career transition** who want to explore different trades, and **people who have difficulties integrating into or staying** in the labour market. The types of internships can also vary widely (see sidebar “What is an internship?”).

This reference guide is intended to support the employer or internship supervisor within the company, regardless of the type of intern or internship. Developed in collaboration with career development professionals and employers, it provides

an overview of the different steps (before, during and after) and conditions to optimize the impact of the experience for everybody involved.

We encourage you to adapt the strategies and tools to the reality of your organization and the context of the internship. You will also notice that several best practices related to onboarding interns are similar to those recommended for regular employees. Feel free to build on the HR tools that are already in place in your organization and tailor them as needed.

Legend



Adaptation required

Most of the examples and tools presented must be adapted to your situation and type of internship/intern



Tip

Additional suggestion



Document to download

Template or model to download and adapt to your situation



Additional resource

To dig deeper into your search for information

What is an Internship?

An internship is a supervised, hands-on learning activity that meets a specific training objective and allows an individual to observe, acquire or apply (personal or professional) skills in a work setting.

Types of internships

The typology established by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur identifies three main types of internships, regardless of whether they are undertaken as part of an employability program or within an academic environment:

- 1**
Observational Internship
The intern observes an employee to confirm their career choice, explore a work environment and learn about the main tasks related to the position.
- 2**
Skills Acquisition Internship
The intern gradually integrates into the work environment and acquires new knowledge, techniques, etc. with the help of their supervisor.
- 3**
Skills Application Internship
The intern is already trained or has experience in the field and puts their knowledge and techniques into practice in the company.

The first type of internship (#1) can last from a few hours to a few days, while acquisition (#2) or skill implementation internships (#3) usually last longer, from a few days or weeks to a few months. These three types require varying levels of commitment from the company and the intern.

The legal status of the internship

The term "internship" is not currently defined in Québec legislation, resulting in legal uncertainty as to the status of interns and applicable standards. Typically, their status is determined by whether they are paid during the internship, in return for work performed.



Document to download

Status of Interns According to the Type of Remuneration
extra.ca/internship_status

Regardless of whether the candidate is paid or not, it is important to consider the internship as a learning opportunity and to make sure that all the necessary conditions are in place to ensure its success. Thus, an intern should not be synonymous with employee replacement or cheap labour.



Before the Internship

Several steps might be necessary before onboarding an intern in your company:

- Developing and distributing an internship offer
- Selecting the right intern
- Preparing for the intern's arrival
- Defining the roles and responsibilities
- Signing an internship contract

Of course, if you receive a referral from an outside partner; either from an employment counselling centre or an educational institution, you can skip the first step and go directly to the intern selection phase.



Adaptation required

Note that these steps are flexible depending on the type of internship. A one-day observational internship does not require the same preparation as a four-month one.

1. Developing and Distributing an Internship Offer

By regularly assessing your labour needs, you will be able to anticipate and prepare for future mandates. You will then have more time to find the right person and will also be able to take advantage of the usual student internship periods (e.g., university terms). If you want the internship to lead to a longer-term job within your company, the internship mandate can then become a job description.

Develop an internship mandate

Why?

Like a job description, an internship mandate is an essential management tool, as it allows you to:

- Clarify responsibilities and tasks related to this specific mandate;
- Establish a candidate profile, including required qualifications and key competencies;
- Specify expected results and management expectations;
- Indicate the compensation offered (if applicable) based on the prevailing salary scale;
- Facilitate the recruitment, selection and integration of the intern (by guiding the preparation of the internship offer and orienting interview questions, for example);
- Identify and develop the successful candidate's skills through training and development;
- Provide the basis for the intern's evaluation and assessment.

In a nutshell, writing an internship mandate helps to clarify and identify your needs.

How?

1. Determine the tasks and activities required for the mandate to be carried out.

- a. Indicate how important each task is (high priority, important or low priority);
- b. Specify the percentage (%) of time allowed for each task.



If you don't know where to start, ask the immediate supervisor of the relevant department and/or a few employees who occupy a similar position or are familiar with these duties.

Examples of questions to ask:

- What are the main responsibilities of this mandate?
 - What are your daily or occasional activities? What tasks should you do that you currently don't (for various reasons)?
 - How do you perform your tasks?
 - What skills do you consider as essential to do your job well?
-

2. Identify the *qualifications* and *competencies* required to perform these tasks.

3. Fill in an internship mandate template.

Definitions

Qualification is based on observable facts and on specific objectives, such as the level of education completed, the number of years of experience, a certificate of the required competence, etc.

Competency is based on knowledge, skills and attitudes; such as the ability to organize, analyze and synthesize, provide leadership, etc.



Checklist for Designing an Internship Mandate

1. Position title;
2. Type of position (permanent/temporary/contractual, full or part time, etc.);
3. Hierarchical level: identify immediate supervisor, department head, executive director;
4. Key responsibilities and duties;
5. Overview of tasks to be completed (daily, monthly, annually);
6. Work-related objectives: expected results, performance indicators, etc.;
7. Competency profile: required qualifications (training and experience) and desired skills (knowledge, expertise, behaviours, etc.);
8. Salary and other forms of compensation.



Document to download

Template for an Internship Mandate
axtra.ca/internship_mandate

Definitions

Knowledge: the body of knowledge acquired through training (classroom, online and reading) or experience.

Expertise: the application of knowledge; the ability to put knowledge into action within the framework of a profession.

Soft skills: the personal and behavioural qualities (interpersonal and human skills, attitude, etc.) of an individual in a professional environment.

Create a comprehensive and effective internship offer

The more specific your internship offer is without being overly restrictive, the better your chances of receiving applications that meet your needs are. It is important to differentiate yourself from the competition and to promote your company. Take the time to list the benefits of doing an internship in your organization (e.g., job opportunities afterwards, cutting-edge technology, dynamic team, etc.).

Checklist for Designing an Internship Offer

Your internship offer should contain the following information:

1. Internship/position title;
2. Brief overview of your company (business sector, mission, products, services, etc.);
3. Main tasks and responsibilities;
4. Desired intern profile: qualifications, skills or experience required;
5. Working conditions (schedule, location, special requirements, such as a driver's licence, physical condition, work-related travel, etc.);
6. Remuneration (salary and other benefits);
7. How to apply (required documents, dates to remember);
8. Company contact information.



Additional resource

Hire Employees – Employer Resources,
Government of Canada
[jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/resources/
hire-employees](https://jobbank.gc.ca/hiring/resources/hire-employees)

Post your internship offer

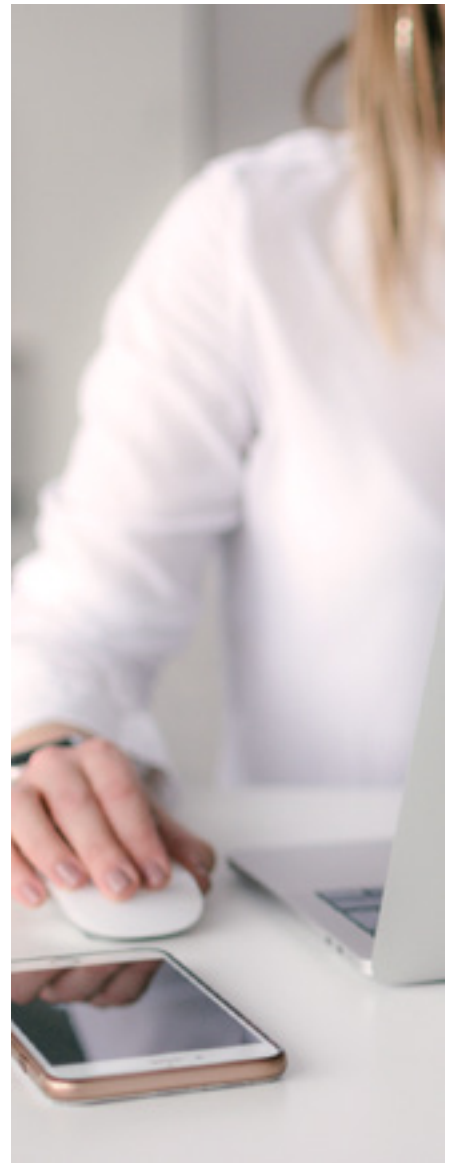
Finding the right intern is as important as hiring a new employee. After all, this candidate could be your next employee! So make sure you cover all the bases through the process.

Where should you post your internship offer?

- Your company's website and social media
- Specialized websites: trouveunstage.com, Jobboom, Indeed, Monster, Workopolis, arrondissement.com
- Social media: LinkedIn, Facebook (specialized groups according to your sector)
- Placement sites of educational institutions: CEGEPs, universities, vocational training centres, adult education centres
- Job bank of employment counselling centres and other employability organizations
- Government sites: online placement, sector workforce committees (CSMO)
- Websites of professional associations or orders
- Job boards (Services Québec offices, community centres, etc.)
- Common or public areas of your company: reception, lobby, cash register
- Advertisements in local newspapers

Other recruitment methods

- Attend local job fairs and exhibitions
- Establish partnerships with employment counselling centres and other employability organizations that may be able to refer you candidates
- Participate in recruitment days at educational institutions to meet students and graduates in your field of activity
- Give workshops or lectures on your sector at employment counselling centres or educational institutions to promote your organization
- Get involved in networking events and optimize word of mouth
- Hold Open House events to promote your organization and the internships offered
- Offer your employees a bonus for referring a candidate.



Tip

Remember to adapt the visuals of your internship offer based on the platform that you're posting on. For example, for social media; keep the text short and snappy and include a link to the full offer on your website.

2. Selecting the Right Intern

Conduct interviews

Pre-selection of candidates

Review the applications received and focus on the responsibilities, criteria and requirements you identified when drafting the internship description. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the candidate have the required **qualifications** (diplomas, experience)?
- Does the candidate have the needed **skills** (expertise, soft skills)?

Different types of interviews

As with a regular employee, several types of interviews can be used to recruit an intern, including:

- **Phone interview:** often to establish initial contact and prescreen candidates
- **Traditional interview:** the most common, usually in person
- **Group interview:** many applicants are brought together to answer questions in turns
- **Situational interview:** the individual must solve problems related to the position
- **Informal interview:** during a networking activity, for example

Phone screening interview

If you have received many resumes and aren't sure which candidates to interview, you may wish to conduct short phone interviews with some of them, in order to reduce the number of people you'll decide to meet. These screening interviews are a good way to assess the applicant's motivation and availability, as well as their educational background and work experience (if applicable). Also, if the internship requires a specific technical skill, it is a good idea to verify if the individual owns that competence during the phone interview.



Tip

Caution! A phone interview should not be used to check a candidate's soft skills. Many people who present barriers to employment, who have little educational background or who are newcomers to Québec may have difficulty making a good impression over the phone. Do not automatically reject these people, who could be valuable assets for your company. Instead, meet them in person; either for a short interview or during a visit to an employment counselling centre.

Pre-selection sample questions

1. **Motivation:**
What motivated you to apply for this internship?
2. **Experience:**
Do you have any experience related to the internship?
3. **Key skill:**
Which functions can you perform with a certain software/tool/etc.?
4. **Confirmation:**
Are you willing to work a flexible/evening/part-time schedule (based on the working conditions)?

Thank the candidate for taking the time to answer your questions. Tell them that you'll reach out for a face-to-face interview, if their application is successful and provide a deadline, if possible; so that the person doesn't wait to hear from you.

Traditional interview

Now it's time to meet your potential interns! The face-to-face interview will allow you to get to know them better, to assess their soft skills and to verify their competencies. Feel free to draw from the samples provided below to build your own list of interview questions. Also, make sure to have a copy of the candidate's resume on hand and a piece of paper to take notes during the interview.

Select the right candidate

Having worked through these steps, your decision will be much easier to make, especially if you base it on:

- The intern's application
- Your evaluation tool during the phone interview and the selection interview;
- Your notes and those of a colleague (if applicable);
- The candidate's affinity with the work team.



Adaptation required

A good interview outline contains questions tailored to your company, the position to be filled and the applicant's resume. For example, questions about experience are not necessary if you're looking to recruit someone with no experience. Similarly, it is best to avoid fictional scenarios if you're recruiting newly arrived immigrant candidates. They may have difficulty projecting themselves into a hypothetical situation and may not understand the intent behind these types of questions.



Document to download

Customizable Interview Outline
axtra.ca/internship_interview



Tip

Remember that your intuition is important too! If you have any doubt, call the individuals at the top of your list back for a second interview. If your choice is made, it is a good idea to inform the selected person as soon as possible (preferably the same day), as most candidates send out multiple applications and can find internships or jobs very quickly. To preserve your employer brand, it's also a good idea to inform unsuccessful applicants as soon as possible, after an interview or test.



Sample Interview Questions

Category	Question	Objective
Knowledge of the company	What do you know about our company/organization?	Check the level of knowledge of the company. If serious, the candidate should have done prior research on your organization.
Motivation	Why do you want to do an internship in our company?	Assess the candidate's enthusiasm and commitment. For example, the answer may be about the company's culture or reputation, the opportunities for learning and advancement, the technologies used, etc.
Training and experience	Do you have any experience or training in this area? How did it prepare you for this internship?	Confirm the intern's qualifications (previous training and/or experience) if applicable.
	What professional (academic) achievement are you most proud of?	Confirm the applicant's experiences/strengths and how they relate to the internship.
	Describe the last mistake you made and how you fixed it.	Assess the intern's level of maturity and ability to reflect/adapt.
Soft skills	What personal qualities and strengths support your application?	Check that they fit the profile of the internship. The answers given must be relevant to the position.
	What are the three things you should improve in your work?	Assess the intern's level of maturity and sincerity. The answers given must be relevant to the position.
Stress management	Can you describe a difficult/uncomfortable situation that you experienced at work or school?	Identify unrevealed weaknesses, candidate susceptibility and stress management, as well as what makes them uncomfortable.
Team spirit	What do you find most difficult about teamwork?	Determine if the applicant is open to working in a team and verify their fit with the existing team.



Category	Question	Objective
Supervision	What do you think makes a good supervisor?	Assess the level of supervision required/desired and the compatibility with the potential supervisor.
Technical competencies	What do you think are the key technical skills required for this position?	Confirm that the candidate understands the position and has the required competencies.
	Mises en situation liées au poste	Place the applicant in a real situation from your work environment to evaluate the actions they take to resolve the issue.
Candidate's turn	Do you have any questions?	A well-prepared candidate would normally have a few questions to ask you (e.g., typical schedule of a day's internship, challenges to expect, etc.).
Availability	When would you be ready to start? What is your availability?	Check or confirm the person's availability.
Next steps	Outline the next steps in the recruitment process.	

3. Preparing for the Intern's Arrival

Preparing for the intern's arrival is essential, just as it is for your regular employees. Timely and efficient planning will help you avoid improvising and forgetting to tell them important things. Being well prepared also conveys a positive image of your company and how you value your employees and interns. You can use this checklist as a guide to create your own list of actions, depending on the specific characteristics of your organization.



Adaptation required

Remember to adapt this list according to the type of internship (objectives, duration, etc.) and the interns themselves. Your preparation will be different, depending on whether you are onboarding a young student who is getting their first professional job, an adult making a career change, a newcomer to Québec or a person who is having difficulty integrating into the workplace.

Checklist for Setting up the Internship

A. Organize the work environment

- Provide a workstation for the intern (i.e., desk, locker, telephone, tools, uniform, safety equipment), according to their needs;
- Plan the necessary resources (i.e., access card or code, email address, phone or extension number);
- Add the intern's contact information (email, phone) to the company's internal lists.

B. Prepare the necessary documents

- Provide a copy of the job description and/or the internship offer;
- Update the employee handbook (if needed);
- Put together the documents the intern must read during the first week (e.g., health and safety rules, company history and policies, product catalogue, annual report);
- Provide a list of tasks for the intern.

C. Notify and prepare the work team

- Meet with the work team to briefly talk about the intern and the position they will occupy;
- Involve them in creating a warm welcome and a pleasant work environment for the intern;
- Remind colleagues of the person's name and position the day before arrival;
- Select the internship supervisor, mentor or sponsor responsible for coaching the intern and define their roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

D. Follow up with the intern before their arrival

- Contact the intern to let them know where and when to report on the first day. Provide the name of the person who will be welcoming them;
- Inform them of the policies and anything they need to know before they arrive (e.g., dress code, parking, cafeteria);
- If possible, invite them to visit the workplace before the internship begins and introduce them to their internship supervisor.



Document to download

Customizable Checklist for
Preparing your Intern's Arrival
axtra.ca/internship_preparation

4. Defining the Roles and Responsibilities

A successful internship is often based on a triple alliance between the intern, the company/supervisor and the external partner; whether it be an employment counselling centre or a training institution. It is therefore important to clearly define everyone's roles and responsibilities, before the start of the internship, in order to avoid potential misunderstandings. Here are some of the obligations generally associated with each party. It is worth discussing them together and including them in the internship contract (see step 5).

Intern ▼

The intern agrees to:

- Report to work and perform duties as scheduled;
- Work in a respectful, responsible, and appropriate manner in the workplace;
- Follow company rules (e.g., work protocols, policies, organizational culture);
- Prepare reports, evaluations and other probationary documents on time (if applicable);
- Notify their supervisor of their absence.

As a key player in their on-the-job learning, the intern must set and achieve their personal and professional objectives, take initiatives within the limits of their abilities, interact with co-workers, and create situations where they can ask questions and try to find solutions.

Company and supervisor ▼

The company agrees to:

- Provide an internship that is consistent with the learning objectives and abilities of the candidate;
- Onboard the intern and provide them with the necessary tools throughout the internship;
- Offer them the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks consistent with their skills, as agreed upon in the internship contract;
- Appoint a supervisor whose task will be to guide and advise the intern;
- Inform the external partner in case of serious difficulties or failures from the intern;
- Complete the documents required by the external partner.

The supervisor agrees to:

- Inform the intern of the company's rules, codes, and work policies;
- Facilitate the intern's integration into the company and work team;
- Advise and support the intern in acquiring and developing their personal and professional skills (based on the internship objectives defined in the following section);
- Ensure regular follow-up of their work and provide constructive feedback;
- Evaluate the quality of the work done and the achievement of the objectives set out in the internship contract.

The company and the supervisor must also provide a healthy and formative work environment for the intern. They must also be potential mistakes and difficulties.



External partner and coordinator ▼

The external partner (employment counselling centre or educational institution) agrees to:

- Define, with the intern, the objectives of the internship and ensure that the internship meets them;
- Support the intern in seeking and preparing for the internship (if needed);
- Communicate the terms and conditions of the internship to the company;
- Ensure that the internship runs smoothly overall and that the concerned parties are satisfied.

The external coordinator of the internship agrees to:

- Support the intern in their professional development process by helping them identify their needs and finding ways to meet them;

- Ensure that the tasks assigned to the intern are consistent with the internship contract (or agreed to by the three parties following a re-evaluation during the internship);
- Act as a resource person for the intern, the supervisor and the company by conducting regular follow-ups;
- Evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the knowledge and skills acquired during the internship and those yet to be developed.

The external partner and coordinator must also ensure that the intern and the company are provided with an appropriate and secure environment, in order to create the appropriate conditions for learning and being successful.

5. Signing an Internship Contract

Although internship contracts are not legally required, their use is recommended in order to avoid misunderstandings. Since some informations may vary depending on your company's situation or your intern's status (paid or not), it is a good idea to adapt the document according to your needs (e.g., whether or not the intern has liability insurance with the external partner). The external partner (employment counselling centre or educational institution) will usually provide you with a pre-filled internship contract. All you have to do is complete and sign it.

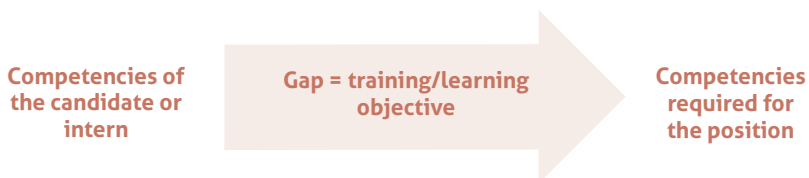
Things to consider before signing the internship contract

A. Set internship objectives and confirm your company's ability to achieve them:

Depending on the intern's profile, the **learning objectives** may be professional (expertise, such as developing or applying technical abilities) or personal (soft skills, such as gaining autonomy or developing communication skills with peers).

Definition

Learning objective:
knowledge to be acquired and/or competencies (core or technical) to be developed during the internship



Before you commit, make sure that your company can support the intern in the pursuit of their goals, with the support of the external partner.

B. Develop a task list consistent with the intern's skills:

depending on the type of internship, the intern may suggest a list of tasks corresponding to their training or may ask you to specify the responsibilities associated with a certain position. Regardless of the scenario, make sure you can suggest various assignments to the intern based on their abilities and adjust their workload as they learn.

“[I enjoyed] being able to test what I learned in school and apply it. I also had big responsibilities in my internship mandate and it was fun to be able to challenge myself like that.”

– Intern

C. Clarify the expectations of each stakeholder:

Guidance and evaluation methods will vary, based on the type of internship and the intern. For example, the external partner could arrange a series of meetings with the intern and/or the external coordinator. As the onboarding company, you will also be responsible for completing certain documents (e.g., evaluation reports); although most external organizations try to minimize the administrative burden of enrolling an intern. Make sure you understand what is expected from you throughout the internship and communicate your own expectations as an employer.

D. Identify the remuneration options (if applicable) available to the intern and the company:

The issue of intern remuneration is a hot topic that affects both the education and employability sectors. There is currently no single guideline for intern remuneration. Similarly, the financial support available to onboarding companies varies from one internship to another. Please refer to the external partner for more information (if applicable) on how the intern will be paid and the financial support and tax benefits available to companies; depending on the type of internship and intern you will onboard.

Financial support and tax benefits for businesses

Wage subsidies

Many wage subsidies for onboarding an intern are available from the Government of Québec and other funding agencies. These internship funding programs may cover, in part or in full, the intern's salary; in addition to offering other benefits (e.g., coaching, access to training tools, outreach activities for the work team, etc.). Your external partner will be able to provide you with information on eligibility, benefits, and requirements; which will simplify the process for you.

Contact your local employment counselling centre or a Services Québec office for more information.



Additional resources

List of employment counselling centres throughout Québec (geolocation service), trouvetonX.ca

List of Services Québec offices, localisateur.servicesquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en

Tax credit for on-the-job internship

This tax credit is financial aid granted by the Government of Québec for internships in the workplace, for two types of interns:

1. Students enrolled full-time in high school, college or university undergraduate or graduate programs; or in a prescribed program offered by a recognized institution and providing for one or more internships for a total duration of at least 140 hours;
2. Apprentices registered in the Workplace Apprenticeship Program (PAMT) administered by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale or by the Kativik Regional Government.

Salaries paid to the intern and internship supervisor are claimable expenses for the tax credit, if the company is eligible.



Additional resource

Revenu Québec,
revenuquebec.ca

The Job Skills Act

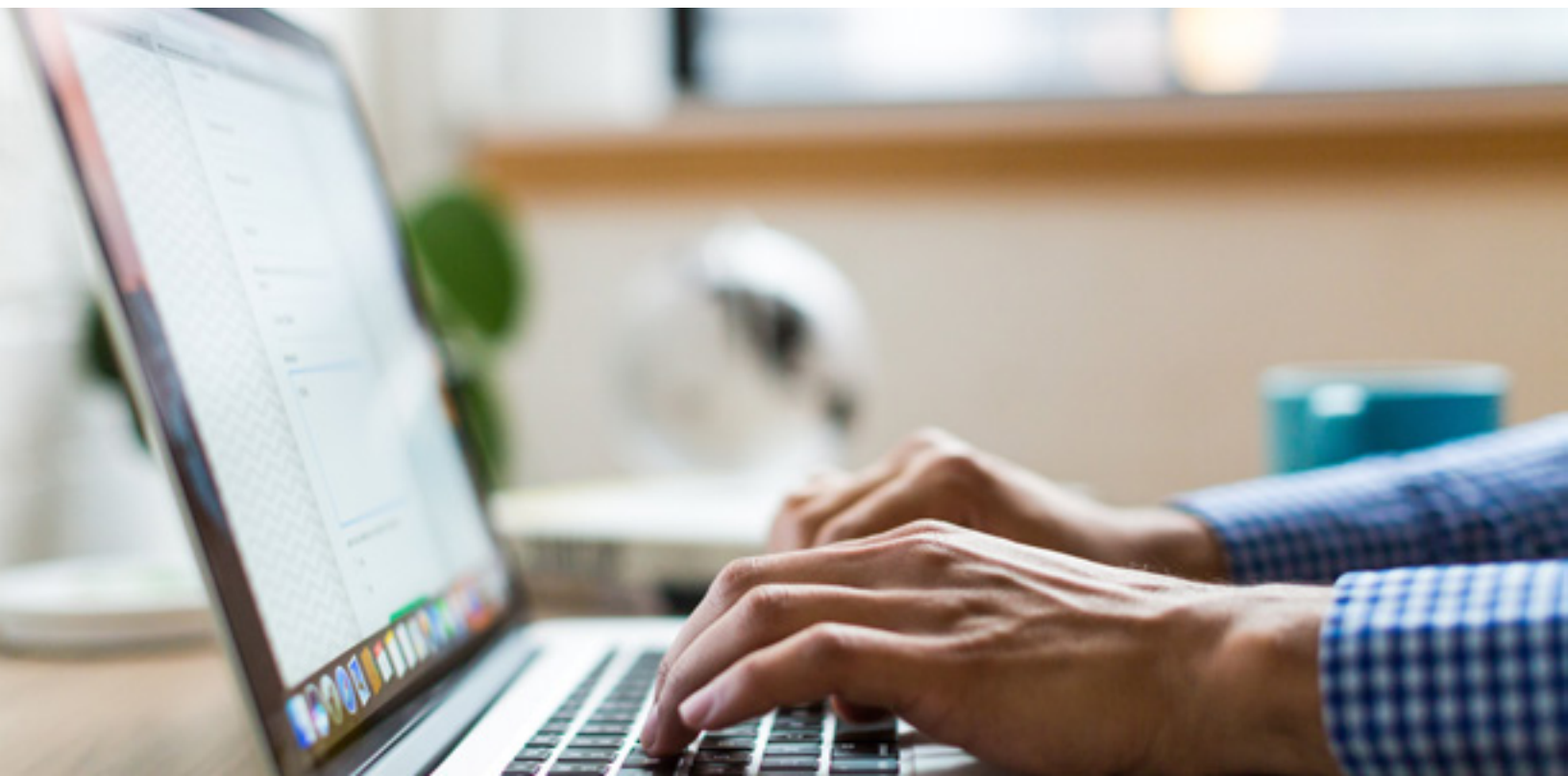
The purpose of the *Loi sur les compétences* (*Job Skills Act*, also known as the *1% Act*) is to improve the qualifications and skills of the workforce and to promote the integration of workers into the labour market, as well as their mobility. Under this act, companies with an annual payroll of more than 2 million dollars must invest, during the same calendar year, the equivalent of at least 1% of that payroll in training activities that develop the abilities of their employees.

Since certain types of internships are recognized as eligible training activities, the total salary paid to the intern may count as a training expense for you. Check with your external partner, the Government of Québec or online to see if you qualify.



Additional resource

Loi sur les compétences,
Emploi-Québec (in French only),
bit.ly/stage_loi



Checklist for Drafting an Internship Contract

1. Identification of the intern: name and contact information
2. Identification of the company and supervisor: name and contact information
3. Identification of the external partner and coordinator: name and contact information
4. Internship information: job title, location, learning objectives
5. Conditions of the internship: duration, schedule, remuneration, etc.
6. Specific clauses (e.g., insurance, confidentiality, work equipment, travel, etc.)
7. Special conditions/termination of the internship contract (in case of illness, strike, etc.)
8. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (including coaching and evaluation procedures)
9. Signature of parties (intern, company, supervisor, external coordinator)



Tip

Appoint the in-house supervisor prior to the start of the internship. Request that they be present, if possible, when the internship contract is signed; so that all parties are aware of the negotiated terms. This is also a good opportunity for the supervisor to meet the intern, before the internship begins.



Document to download

Customizable Internship Contract,
axtra.ca/internship_contract



Sample of a Simple Internship Contract

Sample of a Simple Internship Contract

Identification of the company

Name: _____

Contact person: _____

Contact details: _____

Identification of the supervisor

Name: _____

Contact details: _____

Identification of the intern

Name: _____

Contact details: _____

Identification of the external coordinator

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Contact details: _____

Internship information

Position: _____

Objectives: _____

Tasks: _____

Duration: _____

Schedule: _____

Remuneration (if applicable): _____

Specific clauses

- List the conditions related to insurance, confidentiality, work equipment, travel, termination of the internship contract, etc.

Roles and responsibilities

- List the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders (intern, company, supervisor, external partner, and external coordinator) identified in Step 4
- Include arrangements for the supervision of the intern (if necessary)

Signatures

Intern: _____

Employer: _____

Supervisor: _____

External coordinator: _____

Date



During the Internship

You are now ready to onboard your intern into your team. But where do you start? Here are some ideas for:

- Welcoming the intern on their first day
- Supervising the intern in the company
- Integrating the intern and overcoming potential challenges
- Evaluating the intern

6. Welcoming the Intern on Their First Day

The welcome day gives you an opportunity to convey a positive and professional image of your company, to create a pleasant work climate and to generate a solid sense of belonging right from the start. With a structured onboarding approach, your intern will also achieve a high level of autonomy and productivity more quickly; while becoming a great ambassador for your organization.



Tip

Consider preparing a welcome package in which you can include all the key documents to give to the intern. The first day is filled with new information that they might find overwhelming. A welcome package makes it easier for them to find answers to any questions they may have as they settle into work.



Document to download

Customizable Checklist for the Intern's First Day,
extra.ca/internship_firstday

Getting a warm welcome is so important for starting the internship and remaining motivated. It's the first step. And that first step is important: if you sprain your ankle at the start of a run, it's tough to keep going.

– Employment counsellor



Tip

As the person responsible for the internship within the company, make sure to arrange your own schedule, so that you are as available as possible on the intern's the first day.

Checklist for the Intern's First Day

A. Welcome

- Welcome the intern upon arrival: a few friendly words, mutual introductions;
- Outline the orientation process for the first days;
- Introduce the intern to team members, explaining their roles and responsibilities;
- At lunch time, accompany the intern to the cafeteria (e.g., for a lunch with the team).

B. Company tour

- Walk around and show offices, meeting rooms, common areas;
- Specify where to find emergency exits, rest areas, cafeterias, washrooms, etc.;
- Indicate where physical resources are kept (tools, office supplies, etc.);
- Explain how to operate equipment in the workplace safely.

C. Overview of the organization

- Provide a brief overview of the organization: mission, history, values, services and products, etc.;
- Introduce the organizational chart of the company;
- Outline internal policies as required (e.g., pay, leave, travel);

- Review occupational health & safety standards and procedures as required and advise the intern on mandatory safety equipment (boots, helmet, etc.);
- Show and hand over a copy of the employee's manual (or short version).

D. Duties and responsibilities

- Review the internship description and learning objectives;
- Clarify your expectations about the internship: asking questions, requesting help, being independent, taking the initiative, etc. Assess the intern's understanding of these expectations;
- Explain the connection between their position and other positions throughout the organization;
- Provide them with a short to-do list for their first day: set up your workstation, review the documentation provided, perform your first technical task;
- Schedule duties for the first week: team conferences, meetings with key people to know within the organization.

E. Administration

- Complete paperwork (as needed): contract, employee record, payroll;
- Remind them of important information: arrival and departure times, mealtimes, etc.;
- Confirm access to the office mailbox and show them how to answer the phone;
- Explain the procedures to follow in case of absence or illness;
- Provide access cards or codes as needed (e.g., building, meeting rooms, printer).

7. Providing Supervision

One of the essential conditions for the success of an internship is the choice of the company supervisor. In practice, it's not always beneficial to choose the expert on your work team. They may not have the time or the inclination to supervise an intern in a learning situation. If the task of mentoring is imposed on a supervisor who is already overworking and uninterested in passing on their knowledge and skills, none of the parties involved will reap the expected benefits of the internship.

Make sure you carefully weigh the technical skills, interpersonal skills, availability and interest of your team members, before selecting a supervisor for your intern.

The qualities of a good company supervisor

- Practices or has practised the specific tasks of the internship (or at least most of them);
- Is accessible, available, and responsive (depending on schedule and amount of work);
- Has good communication skills (with the intern, the employer and the external coordinator);
- Can create a trusting relationship with the intern;
- Shows patience and teaching skills;
- Demonstrates the ability to adapt (e.g., to adjust the objectives of the internship);
- Can evaluate the tasks performed by the intern and give constructive feedback.

I might not have been as comfortable if I'd been left to my own devices and then told: "Oh, just ask someone if you need help." But somebody was there for me: I liked that.

– Intern

I liked it when workplaces gave us a lot of autonomy and trusted us with what we were doing, but still supervised us.

– Intern

Checklist for the Company Supervisor

Follow up regularly throughout the internship and ask yourself:

- Were you clear and specific enough about expectations?
- Does the intern seem to be integrating well into your work team?
- Did you create a secure work environment for the intern, by giving them room to make mistakes and reassuring them of your support throughout their internship?
- Have you taken the time to explain or demonstrate the task(s) to the intern?
- Does the intern have the tools and material they need to do their work?
- Were you able to help the intern with more complex tasks?
- Is the intern making good progress in achieving the learning objectives set at the start of the internship?
- Do you adjust expectations and tasks according to the intern's learning pace?
- Are you giving feedback regularly, including praise for good work and suggestions for improvement?

I liked that I always got feedback about my work: I knew what was good and what was not so good. I could ask questions and I always got answers.

– Intern

Checklist for Successful Feedback

- 1. Be diligent:** give feedback as soon as possible after a task or activity, so that the information is still fresh in your mind and in the intern's;
- 2. Be mindful of your verbal and non-verbal language:** avoid accusing the intern directly ("You did not"); instead focus on observed behaviours ("I noticed that...");
- 3. Be specific and selective:** if possible, focus on one behaviour at a time, to avoid making the intern feel overwhelmed and powerless. If necessary, break down the tasks into smaller steps and set a goal for each one;
- 4. Be explicit:** use facts rather than interpretations or opinions;
- 5. Be aware of your cultural biases and those of the intern (if any):** explore different possibilities to interpret a situation that may be linked to an intercultural variable (e.g., communication, time management, hierarchy, etc.), but avoid associating everything to cultural differences;
- 6. Pay attention to the intern's reaction:** be open to discussion, if the person reacts and asks you questions. If they don't say anything, question their understanding: ("How do you feel?»;
- 7. Be constructive:** help the intern identify possible solutions, set up an action plan if necessary and discuss next steps together.

8. Integrating the Intern and Overcoming Potential Challenges

Regardless of your intern's profile, it's likely that they will encounter some challenges during the internship, whether professional (e.g., difficulty completing a task, lack of technical knowledge), relational (e.g., misunderstanding with a colleague) or personal (e.g., difficulties with transportation or work-life balance). Here are some of the most common challenges and some suggestions to help you understand and overcome them.



Tip

These are provided as a guide only. You should consult the external internship coordinator, if you or your intern experience significant challenges during the internship.

Examples of Challenges and Possible Solutions

Challenges

Explanations and solutions

Learning challenges

The pace and method of learning vary from person to person. Some work very well with oral instructions, while others prefer a hands-on demonstration of the task. If your intern has difficulties with a task, try to break it down into several small steps and explain them one by one; adapting your teaching method to their way of learning, if possible (e.g., visual, auditory, etc.).

Not enough tasks

An insufficient number of tasks could sap your intern's motivation. If you're unsure of what to assign, refer to the internship contract; which should provide some guidelines. If your intern is learning faster than expected, you may need to adjust the original tasks to accommodate to their learning pace.

Too many tasks

Remember that an intern generally needs more time than a professional to complete the same task. Don't overburden your intern needlessly and keep an eye out for signs of excessive stress.

Stress management

In addition to work overload, there are several factors that can affect stress at work, including unclear expectations, lack of support or recognition or a climate of insecurity. Be alert to any physical or psychological manifestations of stress from your intern. If necessary, take the time to meet with them, reassure them and find solutions together to reduce it.

Lack of technical knowledge

Your expectations of the intern's initial training may not be realistic. Most training courses cover a wide range of tasks, but do not allow for in-depth exploration of all the tools or ways of doing things. It's helpful to take the time to explain how the software, tools or equipment used by your company work.

Lack of workplace experience

Your intern might be having their first professional experience within your company. If this is the case, they may not yet have learned the appropriate responses and attitude to adopt at work, particularly soft skills. In this case, it is advisable to increase the level of supervision, to help them develop the required behaviours (in addition to doing the work).

Mental health disorders

Mental health problems vary and their symptoms differ from one person to another. If the intern's disorder is known and has been disclosed during the internship interview, remember that your role is not to counsel them; but rather to offer support and take steps to accommodate their needs in the workplace, whenever possible. If you suspect an unscreened problem, avoid making a diagnosis and promptly contact the external internship coordinator who can then refer the intern to available resources.



Challenges

Explanations and solutions

Difficulties in social integration

Your intern may have some difficulty integrating into the work team, especially if they are self-conscious or anxious by nature. If this is the case, consider inviting them to join you at lunchtime to facilitate their integration, so that they don't have to go to the cafeteria alone. If these difficulties don't interfere with their work, take small steps to avoid putting pressure on them. If you feel that they are interfering with the placement, refer to the external coordinator.

Cultural diversity

Newcomers to Québec may be accustomed to operating in different work environments with distinct norms (e.g., of hierarchy or communication). Learn about current practices in the intern's home country (through research on the Internet) and make sure to explain how you work and communicate.

Language

If your working language differs from the intern's native language, it might be beneficial to confirm whether they understand the given information. Avoid closed questions if possible (*"Did you understand?"*) and focus on open-ended questions (*"What do you understand from our discussion?"*).

Conflict with a colleague or supervisor

Some misunderstandings are minor and can be solved without outside involvement. However, if a conflict occurs and persists, it's best not to let the situation deteriorate; as this can affect the general work environment. If you're at a dead end, ask the external coordinator for help.

Organizational difficulties

If your intern often arrives late or does not observe work schedules, sit down with them to clarify your expectations. If the problem persists despite the measures taken by your company, discuss it with the external internship coordinator.

To summarize, remember that your role is to provide a stimulating internship environment and to supervise the intern's learning process. If you encounter any difficulties, contact the external internship coordinator as soon as possible. They know the intern well and are trained to respond to various types of internship-related situations. Together, you will be able to find solutions that are suitable for all involved parties and thus create the conditions for success – for both the intern and your company.



9. Evaluating the Intern

One of your roles as the onboarding company and supervisor is to provide regular feedback to the intern and to communicate with the external coordinator, as needed or established. You will also most likely be involved in evaluating the internship and the intern. Depending on the duration and complexity of the internship, the number of evaluations may vary. The most common ones are those carried out in the middle and at the end of the internship.

It is recommended that you ask the intern to complete the summary evaluation prior to your meetings. They will then see the topics to be discussed in advance and can compare their scores with yours for each skill assessed.

Remember that the purpose of these evaluations is not to judge the person, but rather to help them adapt the behaviours and attitude required in a professional environment, as well as to develop their technical skills. You should explain them the objective of evaluations and self-evaluations (if applicable), to avoid misinterpretation and unnecessary stress.

Definitions

Mid-internship evaluation: it provides an opportunity to take stock of the intern's acquired knowledge and skills, to identify areas to be worked on and to help them find ways to achieve their objectives.

Final evaluation: this is used to assess the internship, to verify that the intern has acquired the knowledge and skills related to their initial objective, to point out any remaining areas for improvement, and for school internships to give the student a mark.

Sample Summary Internship Evaluation

Name of the intern: _____

Name of the supervisor: _____

Objectives of the internship: _____

Evaluation scale

- ① Exceeds expectations ② Meets expectations ③ Below expectations ④ Unsatisfactory (N/A) Not evaluated or not applicable

		Score
Knowledge	Mastery of the equipment required for the work (software, tools, etc.)	
	Theoretical or technical knowledge related to the position	
	Application of strategies to acquire missing knowledge	
Professional skills (expertise)	Ability to understand objectives and follow instructions	
	Ability to perform required tasks	
	Ability and willingness to learn and develop	
	Ability to work in a team and/or independently	
	Oral and/or written communication	
	Organizational skills and priority management	
Personal skills (soft skills)	Motivation and perseverance	
	Punctuality and attendance	
	Compliance with the company rules	
	Autonomy and resourcefulness	
	Interpersonal relationships (with supervisor and colleagues)	
	Stress management	

Comments _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Sample summary internship evaluation

The evaluation grid is the tool that allows the supervisor and the external coordinator to follow the intern's progress and to guide their feedback throughout the internship. It is useful to observe and record the intern's professional and personal skills (as they relate to the internship objectives), in preparation for the evaluation meeting. Completing an evaluation grid also makes it easier to identify strengths and areas for improvement, as well as potential avenues for development.

“Recognition and consideration really matter. Because that’s what gives you confidence. If your boss says: “Listen, you did an amazing job this week, congratulations.” [...] You need constructive criticism about what you do, about how to improve. Now that’s productive. Otherwise, if you have nothing to help you improve, you’re not going anywhere.”

– Intern



Adaptation required

The external partner will probably provide you with an evaluation grid adapted to the type of internship and intern. If not, it's important to adapt this grid based on the specific objectives of the internship.



Document to download

Customizable Internship
Evaluation Grid,
axtra.ca/internship_evaluation





After the Internship

10. Reflect on Your Experience

Congratulations, the internship is now over! We hope that the journey was successful for everybody involved. Before closing this chapter, we encourage you to take stock of this experience with the intern, your work team and the external coordinator.

With the intern

If you now intend to hire the intern as a regular employee, remember that this change in status generally requires some adjustments on both sides, even if the intern's integration will be greatly facilitated by their previous experience within your company. Since the new employee is now responsible for attaining their own goals, they may feel pressure and stress that they did not feel during the internship. Adjust your supervision based on your intern's degree of autonomy, to avoid discouraging them and to give them every chance to succeed in this transition.

If the intern is continuing their training or if you do not have a position to offer them:

- Give them a letter of recommendation for their job search;
- Tell them whether you are willing to act as a reference for future job interviews;
- Put them in contact with members of your professional network in order to facilitate their search for an internship or a job.

Even if the intern has not met the objectives set out during their internship, you should take pride in having offered them the opportunity to develop their professional and personal skills. Remember that every intern is unique: a less successful or more difficult experience with one individual does not mean that all internships are the same. Do not hesitate to take on an internship with another person, drawing on your new understanding of how these initiatives work.

With your team

While there are many benefits to onboarding an intern, there is usually some additional workload for the team. It is therefore useful to do a postmortem with both the internship supervisor and co-workers to identify ways to improve the experience for everyone.

With the external coordinator

Whether your journey was completely positive or somewhat challenging, make sure to follow up with the external partner (employment counselling centre or educational institution). Take the opportunity to tell them about:

- Your interest in onboarding other interns in the future (e.g., frequency, number, period);
- What you preferred and what you did not appreciate during the internship;
- The ways they could make your job as an onboarding company easier.

If you wish to continue enrolling interns, stay in touch with your local partners and keep them informed of your availability and workforce needs for both interns and employees. Use a variety of recruitment methods (see step 1) to continue building your employer brand!!

Conclusion

Because of their positive effects, internships are increasingly used as a complement to theoretical training or as a means of integration into employment. They should preferably be an enriching experience for both the intern and the onboarding company. As an employer, this is a unique opportunity to share your knowledge, engage your work teams and help prepare the next generation in your business.

Although many factors contribute to a successful internship, five key elements remain essential:

1. **Adequate recruitment** to find the right intern for your organization;
2. A **clear and diversified mandate** to help train and motivate the intern;
3. **Well-prepared and friendly onboarding**, to create a sense of belonging from the start;
4. A **supervisor who is available and attentive** to support and guide the intern in their learning;
5. A **good working relationship between the company and the external partner**.

We hope this guide has been helpful in answering some of your questions. Keep in mind, however, that the examples and advice provided are illustrative and are not intended to replace the assistance of a qualified professional. If you have questions or doubts about any of the topics covered, contact the partners (employment counselling centres, other employability organizations and educational institutions) in your area.



Additional resources

List of employment counselling centres throughout Québec (geolocation service), www.trouvetonX.ca

List of Services Québec offices, localisateur.servicesquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en





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