



**PSC** | Public Sector  
Commission

# Public sector internship program

## Guide for agencies

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## About the 'Public sector internship program'

The 'Public sector internship program' is an initiative to provide high-calibre university students with practical on-the-job training opportunities within the public sector. The program allows students to complete a work-based project within a public sector agency, applying the knowledge and skills developed through their studies in a professional capacity.

### Overview of an internship placement

- Public sector agencies identify an existing or new project that is suitable for a university student to undertake and writes a brief overview of the project.
- Agency commits to host a student as part of the program.
- Internship projects are advertised online via the Public Sector Commission's Internships Board.
- Eligible students from universities in Western Australia apply for projects that relate to their course of study, provided they have the endorsement of their unit coordinator.
- Interns are selected by agencies and assigned a workplace supervisor. All resources necessary to complete the project are provided.
- Work undertaken by interns is unpaid, typically one day per week, across a three or four month period.
- Successful completion of the project earns the student academic credit toward their degree.

### Benefits

The program can benefit your agency by providing:

- access to a free resource that is skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic
- increase capacity to scope, undertake and complete key work projects
- opportunities to identify and train future prospective public sector employees
- an avenue to increase workplace diversity
- development opportunities for staff to supervise and mentor interns.

# Commitments of an internship placement

Before deciding to participate in the program, it is important that agencies have read and are able to meet the requirements of an internship placement.

Agency role and responsibilities	
Propose a <b>workplace project</b> that is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suitable for the level of skills, knowledge and experience of an undergraduate or postgraduate university student</li> <li>• well defined, with clearly articulated scope and deliverables</li> <li>• able to be completed within the proposed timeframe.</li> </ul>
Complete the <b>intern selection</b> process by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advertising the project on the Internships Board via RAMS</li> <li>• selecting a successful intern to undertake the placement</li> <li>• advising the successful and unsuccessful applicants of the outcome of the selection process.</li> </ul>
Nominate a <b>workplace supervisor</b> that will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide assistance to the intern to complete the project</li> <li>• ensure details of the internship placement are jointly agreed and understood by all relevant parties</li> <li>• ensure that the intern has understood the scope and deliverables of the project</li> <li>• establish a work plan with the intern to outline key tasks, timeframes and deadlines</li> <li>• have capacity to meet with the intern and respond to queries on a regular basis</li> <li>• monitor the progress of the intern and provide support and regular feedback.</li> </ul>
Provide <b>workplace resources</b> including but not limited to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a workstation and phone</li> <li>• a computer with relevant software</li> <li>• other resources as required by the project.</li> </ul>
Complete any <b>evaluation and assessment</b> that is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required by the intern’s university in order for the intern to gain academic credit toward their degree</li> <li>• requested by the Commission to continue to improve the program.</li> </ul>

## Getting started – steps for agencies

The following steps will need to be completed by agencies to participate in the program:

Identify a project and write a brief project overview	Download the <b>Internship project template</b> from the Commission's website to write the project overview.
Advertise the project via the Internships Board	Refer to the <b>Advertising a public sector internship project</b> document on the Commission's website to assist with advertising the project.
Select a suitable intern to undertake the project	Agencies select an intern who has the appropriate skills and knowledge to complete the project.
Allocate a supervisor and resources	The workplace supervisor will support the intern throughout the duration of the project using necessary resources in the workplace.
Complete any evaluation and assessment requirements	The intern's university will advise of any evaluation and assessment requirements and provide the appropriate documents.

### Role of the Public Sector Commission

To encourage students to apply, the Commission will regularly promote the program and the Internships Board to all universities in Western Australia.

Agencies are responsible for advertising internship projects and selecting interns to ensure they are suitably matched to projects. The Commission is available to provide support to agencies during the process.

## Proposing an internship project

Internship projects can be identified through existing areas of work, or a newly proposed body of work. It is important that the workplace supervisor has a clear understanding of the project to assist the intern to meet the outcomes.

While the number of projects that an agency may propose is not limited, it cannot be guaranteed that each project will secure an intern.

Types of projects that can be undertaken may include, but are not limited to:

- research and data collection and analysis
- developing a communication strategy
- website and graphic design
- reviewing existing policies or practices.

**Examples of projects completed by interns in previous years is provided in Appendix one.**

### Writing a project overview

Agencies will need to write a brief project overview when a project has been identified. This will be used to advertise the project to students.

To assist agencies in writing a project overview, an [Internship project template](#) has been developed. As noted on the template, completed forms are to be provided to your agency's human resources branch to advertise the project.

**An example of a well-structured and written project overview is provided in Appendix two.**

### Tips to establishing a successful project

It is recommended that agencies should consider when identifying and proposing an internship project they:

- outline a project brief that clearly defines the scope and intended outcomes
- ensure that the project can be completed within a reasonable timeframe
- outline an intern profile that identifies the required skills and knowledge
- acknowledge interns are usually inexperienced and are entering the workforce for the first time, so while expectations should be challenging they should also be realistic.

# Advertising an internship placement

Agencies have sole responsibility for advertising Internship placements available within their workplace, and for selecting an intern to undertake the project.

Internship placements are advertised on the Commission’s Internships Board, which can be accessed from the Internship page on the Commission’s website.

## Internships Board

To advertise a project on the Internships Board, agencies will need to create an internship vacancy through the Recruitment Advertising Management System (RAMS).

In most agencies, human resources officers will have responsibility for creating vacancies through RAMS. It is important to identify, and liaise with the officer responsible in your agency to assist with the process.

**Important note:** Agencies can refer to the [Advertising a public sector internship project](#) document on the Commission's website for a step-by-step example.

## When to advertise

The program is open to agencies to offer an internship placement at any stage throughout the year. As a result, there are no longer cut-off dates associated with the program. However, the following dates are recommended to agencies to align to university study periods:

Intake	Advertise from	Notify applicants by	Placement
Semester One	Early-January	Late-February	March - June
Semester Two	Mid-May	Late-June	July - November

**Important note:** Agencies nominate a closing date for the project advertisement, however, a successful intern can be selected prior to this closing date.

If an intern has not been found prior to the closing date, agencies can extend the date to allow the project advertisement to remain on the Internships Board.

## Selecting an intern

Students can view and apply for internship projects online via the Internships Board. As mentioned previously, agencies have responsibility for the entire selection process.

**Important note:** Students require the endorsement of their unit coordinator to apply for projects. When a student submits their application, the unit coordinator will be contacted automatically to confirm their approval. Agencies will be able to view the unit coordinator's response in RAMS.

### Application process for students

Students apply to projects by answering a set of standard questions, which includes their personal and university details, as well as specific application questions.

Unless otherwise stated in the advertisement for the project, students are instructed to submit a brief covering letter in no more than one page that addresses:

- why they would like to undertake the project
- how the project aligns to their course of study
- how their skills, knowledge and previous experience will assist them to complete the project.

Applicants also have the option to submit a Curriculum Vitae (CV).

**Important note:** Agencies can choose to amend this application process to better suit their needs. This may include conducting interviews or changing the application questions. Any changes to the application instructions need to be clearly specified within the project advertisement.

### Notifying applicants

Once a successful intern has been selected, agencies should make contact with the student to determine the details of the internship placement. Agencies are also responsible for notifying unsuccessful applicants of the outcome.

**Important note:** If a student requires notification of an outcome prior to the closing date of the project advertisement, they have the option to specify this within their application. Agencies can select interns prior to the nominated closing date to meet these deadlines, but are not required to make or notify the applicant of a decision by this time.

If an intern is selected prior to the closing date of the project advertisement, agencies can close off the vacancy early in RAMS.

## Information about the internship placement

Internship placements will generally commence within the first two weeks of the start of the university study period unless other arrangements have been agreed on with the intern.

The workplace supervisor will need to meet with the intern either prior to, or at the commencement of the placement to agree on the details of the placement. Details to be addressed should include:

- start and end dates of placement
- contact hours and day/s in the office
- scope of work, deliverables and due date/s
- information about academic assessments or evaluations (if applicable).

### Work plan

It is recommended that a work plan to document how the project will be completed be jointly developed by the supervisor and intern at the beginning of the placement. This will ensure that everyone has the same understanding of what is required and how it will be achieved.

Unless otherwise directed by the university, the work plan should address:

- required activities and key tasks
- timeframes to complete each activity
- deadlines to complete each activity.

**Important Note:** In some instances, a work plan will be necessary to meet the intern's academic requirements. It is the responsibility of the intern to ensure that a work plan is completed in accordance with the university requirements and deadlines if required.

### Unit coordinator and academic matters

Unit coordinators are responsible for all academic matters during the placement, including monitoring the intern's contact hours and providing the workplace supervisor with any required information or documents.

Regular contact with the unit coordinator may not be required or possible, but unit coordinators should provide support and advice to agencies regarding all academic matters as needed.

## **Insurance**

Insurance will be covered by the intern's university, and copies of the relevant policies can be provided by the intern or unit coordinator. Agencies will need to provide a copy of certificate of currency for Public Liability insurance if requested by the University.

Agencies should be aware that insurance policies and requirements may differ between universities. If an agency is unsure about their requirements or obligations, the agency should seek its own legal advice.

## **Tips to ensuring a successful internship placement**

Agencies and the workplace supervisor should aim to ensure:

- the intern has the same understanding of the project scope, deliverables and deadlines
- regular and constructive feedback is provided to the intern on their progress – schedule weekly meetings at the commencement of the placement
- other agency staff can assist and support the intern if the workplace supervisor is unavailable
- a work plan is developed and used to guide the project
- the intern is introduced to all staff, included in work meetings where possible and feels part of an inclusive work environment
- the intern does not undertake administrative roles outside of the project scope
- the intern is provided with an enriched learning experience that will assist in their career development and transition from formal study to the workplace.

## **Completion of the internship placement**

Once successful completion of the internship placement has been achieved, the workplace supervisor must meet any evaluation and assessment requirements requested by the intern's university. Providing assessments and evaluations will be necessary for the intern to earn academic credit toward their degree.

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. What changes have occurred to the Internship program?

Prior to 2015, the 'Public sector internship program' was only available during the semester two study period, and the Commission had sole responsibility for matching interns to projects.

As a result of feedback from participants, a number of changes to the program have been implemented. These include:

- making the program available at any time of the year
- establishing an Internships Board to create a central location for the advertisement of all internship opportunities
- allowing agencies to select suitably matched interns.

### 2. Do all public sector internships have to be established through the Commission's program?

It is not mandatory for internship placements to be advertised or arranged through this program, however, any internship placements that are advertised on the Internships Board must meet the Commission's program requirements.

### 3. Can more than one intern complete a project?

Agencies are not limited in the number of interns that they can accept to complete a particular project, however, in most instances agencies will propose a project that is only suitable for one intern.

If an agency can accommodate more than one intern to complete a particular project, this should be clearly specified within the project advert on the Internships Board. Please note however such opportunities may be less likely to attract suitable interest.

### 4. Does the Commission assess or approve the project?

The Commission does not assess, approve, or require a notification when a new internship placement is advertised. The Commission is available to provide assistance and support to agencies as required.

### 5. Can projects be continued over more than one intake?

Work undertaken by previous interns can be developed further by new interns, however, the project will need to be re-advertised on the Internships Board.

### 6. What happens if there is an issue with the intern?

The intern's unit coordinator should be the first point of contact for agencies for any questions or issues with the intern that arises. If the unit coordinator is not able to resolve the issue, then agencies can contact the Commission for further advice.

## Appendix

### Appendix one: Examples of previous internship projects

Agency	Project
Department of Agriculture and Food	Cost and Price Intelligence for Farm Business Analysis
Department of the Attorney General	Research into women in prison to inform the development of a diversion strategy for WA
Department of Commerce	Models for Leadership Development Programs for Management Tiers 3 and 4
Department of Corrective Services	Reaching and Inspiring an Audience of Indigenous Offenders of the Work Potential in the Building and Construction Industry
Department of Environment and Conservation	Design and Generate a Web-Based Communication Tool for Community Bushland Conservation Groups
Equal Opportunity Commission	Research Case Studies on Factors Influencing the Incarceration of Aboriginal People and Ethnic Minority Groups
Department of Aboriginal Affairs	Essential Services Delivery to Remote Aboriginal Communities: Researching Innovative Solutions
Department of Mines and Petroleum	Where are they now? Graduate Progression, Retention and Engagement
Office of the Information Commissioner	Develop Standard Templates for the PowerPoint Presentations and Word Documents
Department of Sport and Recreation	Innovative Ways to Engage and Retain Young People as Community Sport and Recreational Volunteers
Perth Zoo	Online Corporate Induction
Polytechnic West	Develop a Database to Capture Strategic Projects for Reporting to Various Compliance Bodies

## Appendix two: Example of a project brief

Project brief	
<b>Project title</b>	Building human resource capability in the regions
<b>Background</b>	The Foundations of Government HR program is one of the programs delivered through the Centre for Public Sector Excellence. It is designed to build the skills of HR practitioners in the WA public sector, and it is aligned to the Public Sector Human Resource Capability Framework.
<b>Scope</b>	To investigate the feasibility of taking HR skill development into regional WA. The research questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an appetite/need for HR capability development in the regions?</li> <li>• Who would be the target audience? What would constitute a critical mass of interest to make program delivery viable?</li> <li>• What regional-specific needs must be addressed in the delivery of any programs?</li> <li>• Who are the local experts we can tap into?</li> </ul>
<b>Deliverables</b>	Provide a written report detailing research findings and recommended approaches for piloting an HR program in regional Western Australia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of consultation with agencies and HR managers to gauge level of interest and capability gaps</li> <li>• Identification of local issues/content to ensure learning is contextualised to regional needs</li> <li>• Identification of regional HR content experts and capacity of practitioners to participate in programs</li> <li>• Recommendations of a range of models the program could adopt</li> <li>• Capacity of regional training institutes to deliver assessment.</li> </ul>
Intern profile	
<b>Preferred qualification</b>	Applied Psychology (Organisational Psychology), Education or Human Resource Management at a post graduate level.
<b>Required skills and knowledge</b>	The successful intern will have strong analytical, report writing, communication and interpersonal skills, and be able to draw conclusions and achieve outcomes within deadlines.