



## The Practicum Program Overview for Employers

### The main idea:

Employers want to hire students who have experience in their field, a well-developed set of professional skills and a sense of direction. Students want to know if the career path they've chosen to pursue is indeed a good fit for them—both in terms of interests and aptitude—and the best way to determine that is through experience. But for the employer and the student, not just any experience will do. This is where the Practicum Program comes in.

Practicum is an experiential learning collaboration between a student, a faculty advisor of his or her choosing, and an employer, coordinated by the Career Center. All parties have a say in what takes place during the experience, and as such, expectations are clear from the very start. Students can expect to engage in substantive work that is both professional and developmental; employers can expect students to make critical contributions to the company or organization's work; and faculty advisors can expect that students are meeting established learning objectives along the way (with assistance from their supervisors).

Essentially, Practicum is an official, full-time internship program of CWRU supported and coordinated by the Career Center and select faculty.

### The details:

**Who:** The program is designed for upperclassmen (junior or senior standing) and graduate students who wish to pursue a particular, identified career path. Students must have a 2.5 GPA or higher.

**When:** Fall, spring or summer semester.

**Duration:** During the fall or spring semesters, the student must work full-time for a minimum of 14 weeks or 560 hours; during the summer, he or she must work for a minimum of 10 weeks or 400 hours.

**Location:** No limitations. Students have had opportunities in Cleveland, Boston, New York City, London, Shanghai, Houston, D.C., Sunnyvale, CA and elsewhere.

**Compensation:** Almost all practicum positions are paid, with the level of compensation varying depending upon the student's experience and the field in which it takes place.

**Other Perks:** Students maintain full-time student status with CWRU while on Practicum and earn transcript notation upon successful completion. Oh, and it looks pretty darn impressive on the resume!

**The components:**

**Learning Objectives**—Under the guidance of a Faculty Advisor, the student creates 3 learning objectives that reflect what the student wants to get out of the experience, the methods the student will use to evaluate whether or not the goals have been met, and how the student will present proof of their attainment. These goals must then be approved by the Faculty Advisor first and then the Practicum Supervisor.

**Mid-point and Final Evaluations**—Students complete self-evaluations at the mid-point and end of the practicum experience. Practicum Supervisors also evaluate students at these times. The mid-point evaluations will be conducted via a conference call between the student, the supervisor, the faculty advisor, and the Practicum Coordinator with the Career Center. These calls should be set up in advance of the student starting the experience and should only last about 30 minutes. The final evaluations, which will be sent to students and supervisors during the last week of the experience, contain questions designed to determine how successful the student has been in achieving the learning objectives and the extent to which the student has developed specific skills (e.g., problem-solving skills, teamwork, etc.).

**Reflection Exercises**—Students must complete reflection assignments that are uploaded to CWRULink upon completion of the Practicum experience. The format, design, and content of these reflections should be determined together by the Faculty Advisor and the student. Some advisors ask students to submit weekly or monthly reports; others ask for a comprehensive reflection at the end of the experience.

**Tips for Recruiting practicum students from cwru:**

- Post your Practicum positions in [CWRULink](#) and select "Practicum" under the type category
- Participate in on-campus recruiting events like the fall and spring [career fairs](#) and the Meet the Accountants Breakfast in order to meet potential candidates in person
- Host an information session on an important career-related topic to build presence on campus
- Consider offering Practicum opportunities on a regular basis (every spring semester for instance) in order to establish a recruiting cycle that students can anticipate and to which they can look forward.
- Create position descriptions that excite potential candidates and detail the kind of work they can expect to engage in with your company or organization; the more students know, the better they'll be able to consider fit and market themselves to the position (you'll receive better applications as a result!)

**Things to know:**

- Our students consistently exceed employer expectations during their Practicum experiences, as reported by their supervisors in final evaluations
- Most employers (almost all, in fact) report that they are either likely or highly likely to hire students from CWRU again based on their experience participating in Practicum
- Embarking on a Practicum experience requires much consideration and planning on the student's part, so please allow for enough lead time between recruitment for the Practicum and the start of the experience (a semester is recommended)
- For international students, Practicum is one of the only ways for them to gain experience outside of CWRU's campus. As such, they will likely not have prior internship experience. We ask that you keep this in mind when reviewing their applications. In addition, please know that for the employer, hiring an

international student for a Practicum is really no different from hiring a U.S. citizen. CWRU will handle all of the additional paperwork.

- You can hire a student for a full-time internship and then contact Drew Poppleton to turn it into a Practicum before the student starts (even if the position wasn't marketed as a Practicum from the get-go)

For more information about the Practicum Program, please contact Brian Matthews, Assistant Director for Experiential Learning, at [brian.matthews@case.edu](mailto:brian.matthews@case.edu) or 216-368-4446.