

RGD Best Practices for Unpaid Internships

Internships provide professional work experience to someone who is either in school, recently graduated or in need of professional work experience in a specific field. RGD recognizes that internships contribute to raising industry standards but applicable laws must be adhered to. Ontario Ministry of Labour guidelines for internships appear at <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/internships.php>.

Post-secondary institutions that include internships in their programs have guidelines. An RGD who participates in one of these internship programs much uphold the guidelines set out by the institution involved.

Key components for any internship:

- The internship experience benefits the intern
- The employer provides training and exposure to the complexities of real projects
- The internship enhances the intern's portfolio
- The internship enhances the resume and is an opportunity to gain a reference

Responsibilities of firm offering an internship prior to its start:

- Defined responsibilities for the intern
- Defined hours for the intern and defined duration of internship
- Assigned supervisor who will provide ongoing constructive feedback to the intern
- Assigned workspace with adequate software and equipment

Intern's Responsibilities:

- Complete assigned tasks in a thorough and professional manner
- Conform to professional office behaviour, ie. punctuality, notification of absences
- Give notice if unable to complete the internship duration, as was agreed upon
- Understand and respect principles of confidentiality

Conclusion

Based on RGD By-Laws which includes the need to abide by existing labour laws, RGDs who employ interns must meet government mandated labour and minimum wage standards for internships that are not part of an accredited educational program. If employers are providing internship experiences as part of an educational program, the internships may be unpaid but reimbursement for expenses incurred in carrying out job assignments and/or honorariums is highly recommended.