

# Project-based internships



**Building bridges between  
universities and companies**



We see it as our responsibility to contribute to the students' training, and we have good experience with project-based internships being a good learning process. We also benefit greatly from the students, because they help push us and make sure we don't stagnate. They bring new perspectives and are up-to-date with the new literature.

Karen Riisgaard, Project Manager,  
Danish Board of Technology



# Learning processes of great benefit to both the student and the host

A project-based internship can be included in a Bachelor's or Master's degree programme at a university, where the student is assigned to a host such as a company or public or private organisation.

A project-based internship is an unpaid learning process which offers great benefits to both the student and the host. The students bring qualified knowledge into play and get to try out their theoretical and methodological competences in practice.

Project-based internships can involve a daily presence at the host, or other forms of cooperation. For example, students can complete a specific task, investigate a defined problem, trial a particular method or observe a practice. As part of the project-based internship, students must complete an academic assignment – usually related to an issue the student is focusing on at the host. After the internship, the assignment will be assessed by the university and the grade will appear on the students' exam certificate.

The academic requirements for the project-based internship, including learning objectives, student guidance and form of examination, are defined by the given university. The university also decides how many ECTS credits the project-based internship will count towards on the degree programme. The scope of project-based internships can vary, and some students may have to follow one or more courses at the university in parallel with their project-based internship with the host. The project-based internship is not an employment relationship and the student will therefore not have employee status.

In this brochure, students and hosts can find out more about the benefits and expectations of a project-based internship, and helpful advice on planning.

# New perspectives and contact with the universities

As a host, you can benefit greatly from having a student linked to a project-based internship. The student can bring theoretical and methodological knowledge from the university into play in your setting. This could be by conducting analyses, preparing a specific strategy or developing parts of a new or existing product.

At the same time, the student serves as a point of contact to the universities' teaching and research environments. Internships can give you an idea of what the students from various degree programmes are capable of, which may be helpful in relation to recruitment, and strengthen collaboration with the universities on the content and relevance of the degree programmes.

Finally, project-based internships give you the opportunity to meet students and introduce them to your company/organisation, with a view to possible later employment.

## **Benefits for the host:**

- New theoretical and methodological input
- New perspectives on the organisation
- Contact with the universities' educational and research environments
- Assistance in completing specific tasks
- Recruitment advantages.



The students bring a fresh perspective to our work and ensure that we get access to new knowledge and research in relevant areas. They also contribute very positively to completing some of our tasks.

Søren Edelholt, Customer Marketing Manager,  
Arla Foods





It has helped me to see what I want to do. I have developed my competences in the areas I'm most interested in, and I have got to know a lot of great people and gained a large network.

Christian Dalsgaard Nielsen, Master's degree student in marketing, Aarhus University and Arla Foods

## New competences and practical experience

As a student, you come in with a head full of theories, methods and perspectives. You get the opportunity to test out your ideas and knowledge in practice, and you gain experience that strengthens your professional profile, and which you can draw on during and after your degree programme.

In addition to concrete experience, the process improves your job opportunities and can help you to better see what you want to work with after graduation.

### **Benefits for the student:**

- An opportunity to test theories and methods
- New competences
- Stronger professional Profile
- Practical experience
- Network and contact with the labour market.



# Match your expectations

The project-based internship requires an investment from both parties – in time, commitment, planning and matching expectations.

A project-based internship is a learning process which is integrated in the degree programme as part of the courses and concludes with an exam. As a host, you must ensure that the student completes tasks or is clear on how he or she can try out their theoretical and methodological foundation. The complexity and difficulty of the tasks must match what can be expected of a student within the agreed period. It is also a good idea to assign a fixed contact person, who can introduce the student to the

company/organisation and provide guidance and help along the way.

## **The host should:**

- be conscious of the fact that a project-based internship is a learning process and not an employment relationship
- consider whether the student should be a Bachelor's or Master's degree student
- ensure jointly with the student that tasks are well planned
- consider appointing a contact person for the student
- involve the student in the company/organisation fellowship.



We expect students to bring an open mind and drive, and be willing and able to adapt to our company.

Søren Edelholt, Customer Marketing Manager,  
Arla Foods







I expected to get an idea of the things I can work with when I finish my studies. I also expected to gain a greater knowledge of work processes, and learn things like how to prioritise my time. These expectations have been met.

Benedict Steffensen, Master's degree student in environmental planning, Roskilde University and the Danish Board of Technology

## Be familiar with the academic requirements and rules for project-based internships

As a student, you commit to being open and inquisitive, and to participating in the agreed activities and completing the tasks that are part of your project-based internship. You are expected to represent your educational institution with professionalism and a high academic standard.

You must fulfil the academic requirements and rules for project-based internships. It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the rules for project-based internships in your specific degree programme at an early stage.

You need to have knowledge of learning objectives, supervision activities, examination requirements, the project report, and whether milestone meetings or the

like have to be held. These matters are explained in the academic regulations for your degree programme.

Commitment and curiosity are also essential in order to have a good and fruitful project-based internship.

### **The student should:**

- be conscious of the fact that a project-based internship is a learning process
- observe the professional requirements and rules
- complete the agreed tasks
- be a good representative for their university
- be open, inquisitive and committed.



# Planning a project-based internship

Good planning is important to ensure a successful process.



**STUDENT**

I need practical  
experience



**HOST**

We want  
new knowledge



### **The host's guide to planning a project-based internship:**

- Start planning at an early stage. If you want a student in the autumn, you must contact the university in early spring.
  - Think about which degree programmes have students with the knowledge you wish to make use of. This could be technology knowledge, insight into user behaviour, marketing, finance, HR or analysis. The universities are happy to help you find the right degree programmes.
  - Work out whether you want contact with a Bachelor's or Master's degree student, and whether the student should be from a Danish or English-language degree programme.
  - Think in terms of independent tasks for the student which can be completed and documented – including tasks where the student is part of a larger project.
- Create a notice. Some universities have portals for notices. At other universities the director of studies or the board of studies can send out notices to students.
  - Consider the scope of the tasks to be completed and the timing for the project-based internship. Think ideally in terms of semesters – from mid-August until late December and from late January until late May. Do you want the student attached to the company full time, or just a few hours a week?
  - Work out what you will offer the student in terms of gratuity and reimbursement for documented expenses.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about project-based internships, please contact your member organisation or the universities.



It's a good idea to start early, so you can get into contact with the students suited to the project. We try to describe the project in as much detail as possible, so we create the best match between us and the student. There has to be a clear goal of the project-based internship, which is written into the agreement from the outset. There has to be a plan for what is to be achieved, and what the objective is for the student.

Karen Riisgaard, Project Manager,  
Danish Board of Technology





It's a good idea to think outside the box in terms of how you can use your education. I initially focused a lot on culture, but it has opened a lot of doors for me to focus on communication during my project-based internship.

Pernille Kaastrup Christensen, Master's degree student in culture and communication, University of Southern Denmark and the City of Odense

### **The student's guide to planning a project-based internship:**

- Start preparing early. Begin the process a year ahead.
  - Familiarise yourself with the academic requirements for a project-based internship, stated in the course description and academic regulations for your degree programme. These include learning objectives, exam requirements and rules for approval by the university – before you start the project-based internship.
  - Formulate what you want to get out of the project-based internship – beyond the academic requirements and testing out theories, methods and perspectives. Be clear on your expectations and motivation for the project-based internship, and think in terms of formulating an application. The university offers academic guidance as part of the project-based internship, so speak to faculty staff about what you want to get out of the process.
  - Think about how many hours you can spend in the company/organisation. At some universities, a project-based internship typically counts towards 30 ECTS credits. At other universities, an internship is less extensive and must be combined with other teaching.
  - Explore the project-based internship possibilities on the various portals, or contact the companies/organisations you would like to partner with.
  - Inform the host of the guidelines for the internship in your degree programme, so you agree that your tasks need to be organised flexibly in relation to other programme elements.
  - Allocate time to review your experiences theoretically and methodologically, and to write the assignment.
- Contact your university for more information about project-based internships and help in planning.







You need to think about what direction you want to take and what you want to get out of the project-based internship.

Benedict Steffensen, Master's degree student in environmental planning, Roskilde University and the Danish Board of Technology

## Work out an agreement

Once contact has been established, it is a good idea to hold a meeting to discuss learning objectives, academic requirements for the internship, tasks and the time frame. Be specific, to ensure the best conditions for meeting expectations and avoiding misunderstandings. The university must approve the project-based internship prior to commencement.

It is a good idea to produce a written agreement, so the student can document that they are planning to complete a project-based internship during their degree programme, and the host has a record of their agreement with the student. The universities have various examples of how an agreement can be formulated.

### **A good agreement contains elements such as:**

- Definition and specification of tasks.
- Translation of the learning objectives for the internship, e.g. which theoretical knowledge and methods should be applied and tested during the internship.
- Formulation of any personal learning objectives or special contextual or conceptual learning objectives.
- Specification of what the host aims to get out of the process.
- Duration of the internship. When does it start and end? How many hours is the student expected to spend on the project? It is a good idea to think in terms of weeks. There may be weeks in which the student has no lectures and can therefore be more active than in other weeks.
- Practical issues such as keys, photocopying cards, access to systems, etc.
- Financial matters, such as whether the student will be reimbursed for travelling expenses and participate in any lunch scheme or other company schemes. The student must not receive any form of wage during the project-based internship, as there must not be an employment relationship, but it is permitted to offer a gratuity (a small sum of money, not exceeding DKK 3,000 per month) and to cover documented expenses.
- Any legal matters, such as confidentiality and insurance.

# Timing, learning objectives and exams

Project-based internships usually have a course description that defines the learning objectives, scope (ECTS credits), professional activities, student guidance and form of examination.

There are different types of learning objectives in the various degree programmes. However, most learning objectives will be flexible enough to allow the student and the host to make specific agreements regarding the tasks involved that suit both parties.

A project-based internship counts towards a set portion of a degree programme in the form of ECTS credits. The more ECTS credits assigned to a project-based internship, the higher the academic requirements linked to it.

The examination form and requirements also vary depending on the degree programme and the learning objectives for the project-based internship. The exam is usually either an oral exam based on a synopsis or report, or a written exam that is assessed by one of the faculty staff.



We set some learning objectives in relation to what I wanted to achieve in the project-based internship. These included developing my analytical skills.

Christian Dalsgaard Nielsen, Master's degree student in marketing, Aarhus University and Arla Foods



# The small print

## Copyright

As a rule, the student is the copyright holder for their work (report or synopsis). With regard to any other intellectual property rights, it is a good idea to clarify whether the project lies within the host's core area. If so, any rights would normally belong to the host.

## It is recommended that the host and student clarify the following together with the university:

- The student's access to company-specific matters and data, including any sensitive matters.
- Any restrictions on how sensitive matters can be reported on in the project. A deadline should also be set for the company's review of the report. It may be appropriate to clarify the duty of confidentiality and possibly prepare a separate non-disclosure agreement.
- Any restrictions on written assignments being made publicly available. For example, can they only be seen by the university supervisor and co-examiner (where applicable)? (And if so, can this restriction be subject to a time limit?  
Or should key company-specific information only be given in an annex which is kept confidential?)
- Conditions relating to any intellectual property rights flowing from the project/task. The university supervisor's role must also be considered here, particularly if they make an active contribution to development that could potentially give rise to rights.



It's a pleasure to have university students regularly attached, primarily to our strategy department. The students are generally very capable and participate primarily in analysis and insight activities, with a great willingness to listen, learn and deliver. The students contribute specific solutions and input – and we hope we are helping to refine their skills and prepare them for employment.

Mona Juul, CEO & Partner, Envision



It's a good opportunity for both the students and for us. We naturally want many new graduates to remain in the city, and via a project-based internship with us, the students gain a network that may lead to their first job.

Line Skovby Navne, Consultant, City of Odense

### **Danish students' Grants and Loans Scheme (SU) and gratuities**

A project-based internship is integrated in the degree programme as part of the programme's courses or course elements and concludes with an exam. As for other courses in the degree programme, the student can therefore receive SU for courses involving a project-based internship, and the student must not receive a wage. This is based on the principle that a student cannot receive both a wage and SU for the same educational activity. Not even if the student chooses not to receive SU during the project-based internship period. The host has the option of offering a gratuity in parallel with the student's SU, to express appreciation for their time at the company/organisation.

Offering the student a gratuity is voluntary for the host. The student may not receive more than the equivalent of DKK 3,000 per month in gratuity. In order for a student to receive a gratuity in connection with a project-based internship, it must not be paid as an income set in advance, which the student can count on receiving.

The gratuity is taxable in line with the current Danish tax legislation.

If the project-based internship takes place abroad, other conditions may apply. Contact the universities or your member organisation for more information.

### **Reimbursement of documented expenses**

The host has the option to reimburse any documented expenses related to the project-based internship, without affecting the student's SU entitlement.

For example, the host may reimburse transport expenses between their home and training location if the student documents these expenses. A maximum reimbursement amount can be set in the agreement between the student and host. Full or partial reimbursement of expenses can also be agreed. The student must keep documentation for any reimbursement of expenses.

The rules governing gratuities and the reimbursement of documented expenses apply to students in Danish degree programmes.

**Internships:**

**– building bridges between universities and companies**

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Collaborating with students keeps us on our toes. They challenge the status quo and add real value to our business. Having interns also helps us meet our future hiring needs by ensuring a pipeline of candidates, whose aptitudes and abilities we already know.

Henrik M. Christiansen,  
Group Senior Vice President,  
HR, Grundfos

# Further information

You can obtain more information on project-based internships from the various universities:

## **University of Copenhagen**

[http://business.ku.dk/student\\_collaboration/internshipsandprojects/](http://business.ku.dk/student_collaboration/internshipsandprojects/)

## **Aarhus University**

<http://www.au.dk/en/collaboration/>

## **University of Southern Denmark**

<https://www.sdu.dk/en/cooperation>

## **Roskilde University**

For students: <https://intra.ruc.dk/career>

For companies: <https://ruc.dk/studentersamarbejde>

## **Aalborg University**

For students: [www.careers.aau.dk/project-cooperation/](http://www.careers.aau.dk/project-cooperation/)

For companies: <http://www.en.aau.dk/cooperation/how-to-cooperate/cooperate-with-students/>

## **Technical University of Denmark**

<http://www.dtu.dk/Samarbejde/Innovation-og-entreprenuerskab/Samarbejde-med-studerende>



## **Copenhagen Business School**

For students: <https://my.cbs.dk>

For companies: <https://www.cbs.dk/en/collaboration/engage-with-talents/recruiting-our-students>

## **IT University**

<https://en.itu.dk/collaboration/collaboration-with-itu/student-collaboration>