

Apply yourself during internship

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As an intern, endeavour to ask people who have experience in the field you are interested in at the office, to gain more insights on how to pursue your dream. Stock photo

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By Shabibah Nakirigya

No student should ever dodge internship. Internship allows students to gain skills and experience in a field of work they hope to be employed in. By being a part of a professional environment, students get a chance to put into practice the theory they have been studying in class.

Connie Musisi, the head of Careers at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, strongly advocates for internship for every student. “For many students, university can be quite theoretical and an internship is their first opportunity to apply their knowledge to the real world. The experience will not only help you to develop the skills needed to work in your industry but working on real projects for a real organisation will also give you the interpersonal skills that you will need in order to work effectively with others,” she notes.

Most employers are looking for individuals with work experience, internship is one way of doing that while still at university.

“The job market is incredibly competitive, so having a full résumé that includes actual industry experience is sure to be a valuable asset. It has the potential to make you stand out from the competition,” she says.

Gain experience

In addition, students are exposed to the do’s and don’ts of the corporate world which usually takes some time to adjust to ahead of their actual formal employment. “Just like any university has its own rules, regulations and particular way of life, so does every company. Without any previous corporate experience, people may get tied up about how to act, what to wear, personal relationships with others in such an environment.

It is a real gain to get introduced to this whole new world while still a student, to tell the difference and understand what will be expected from you when you are no longer a student. Moreover, a placement tells as much to a student about professional life as it tells about himself or herself,” Musisi says.

Tadeo Twahirwa, a senior relations manager at NSSF, says internships are great for creating networks and connections.

“It has been said many times, it is not about what you know; it is about who you know. While it is vital to know how to perform the required tasks for a particular job, having a good set of industry contacts behind you can be just as vital in helping you find and secure a job after you graduate,” he said as he addressed students of Kyambogo University in a career expo organised by NSSF earlier this year.

Tips to note

These are some of the basics to which you can adhere to ensure that you fit in with your colleagues.

Dress code. Is everyone else wearing a business dress? Then you should too. Do not stand out like a sore thumb – it will just bring the wrong kind of attention your

Punctuality. Be in office at the right time or better come in earlier. Do not waste time at lunch and offer to work an extra hour after clock out time.

Socialising. Many businesses thrive on interpersonal relationships among staff through social events. It could be as simple as drinks after work on a Friday. If you are invited – go! Even if it is just to show your face.

Get feedback. Ask your supervisor how you are doing, and what you could do to improve. An enthusiasm to better yourself will not go unnoticed.

Appreciate. At the end of your internship, let your employers know how much you appreciated the opportunity to work for them.

The complete university guide

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