Internships at PNCA – Frequently Asked Questions

Internships give you an opportunity to shape your education by working off-campus within a creative field during school. Most internships are a lot like apprenticeships, in the sense that you’ll learn from an expert while doing supervised work. This can help you test a potential career path and gain résumé-building experience at the same time.

Before you get started planning for this experience, be sure to educate yourself in PNCA policies as well as the types of opportunities that are available. The word “internship” can mean different things to different people, and it’s very important you understand how to identify and locate the valuable types of internships amidst the less interesting possibilities out there.

To get you started, this sheet lists some of the most common questions students have about internships. Be sure to also read the Internship Syllabus (listed on the Internship Homeroom site) and attend an Internship Info-Session before you get started. Internship credit is not retroactive, so follow all the guidelines here to make sure you stay on track.

What is an internship?
An internship is a high quality art-related work experience that supplements and enhances PNCA’s academic education. To fit the criteria of the internship program organized by PNCA’s BridgeLab Career Center, an internship must incorporate the following qualities:

- Concrete benefit to you
- Mentorship and supervision in various aspects of real-world professional experience
- A safe work environment that is appropriate for the profession
- Meaningful tasks for you to complete
- Clear feedback for you

Please note that some departments have further guidelines for internships. Read below and speak with your department Chair for details and guidance. *In particular, please note that PNCA’s MFA programs have different internship guidelines and are managed by the Department Chairs rather than BridgeLab Career Center.*
**What are the Federal laws regarding unpaid internships?**

A few years ago, the U.S. Department of Labor published some guidelines about unpaid internships. These guidelines are meant to protect your rights as an unpaid intern and, as such, PNCA requires that they must be adhered to at all times. Your internship host will be required to sign a form acknowledging that they understand the six criteria for unpaid internships as summarized here:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training that would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

**You’re talking about unpaid internships – are all internships unpaid?**

Some internships are paid and some are not. There are more unpaid opportunities out there right now. Interestingly enough, some of the most competitive and influential internships are unpaid. It’s important that you educate yourself on the value of your internship opportunity and weigh the different factors before you commit to it.

**May I get credit for an internship?**

If you have located an internship that meets the approval of BridgeLab Career Center and your Department Chair, and if you follow all the guidelines in the syllabus, the answer is yes. It is possible to earn up to 6 internship credits, at a ratio of 1 credit per 45 hours of work. The most common internship is 3 credits (like a regular class) and 135 hours of work. If you are interested in earning 4 or more credits at the same internship site, speak with the Director of the BridgeLab Career Center for further details. If you do not want credit for an internship, speak with them about the ways you can still benefit from PNCA’s internship structure and resources. Note that credit is not retroactive; you need to get registered for the internship on www.reg.pnca.edu before the internship begins.

**Who is eligible to do an internship?**

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors in good academic standing are automatically eligible for internships. If you are not in this category, it may still be possible for you to do an internship. Contact BridgeLab Career Center for details.
What is the timing like for an internship?
Internships do not need to correlate precisely with the beginning and ending of a semester. When they do, there are certain benefits: for example, you are able to meet and work with your peers in formalized mid-term check-ins. When they do not, you will work with BridgeLab Career Center to establish paperwork and other deadlines. Please note that internship completion can affect graduation date – speak with the Registrar and BridgeLab Career Center for details.

When should I start looking for an internship?
If you are hoping to land a very specific opportunity, start looking at least a year in advance. In some instances more time is required. If you are flexible in your expectations, you might take advantage of some of the last-minute opportunities that always come up.

How do I get connected with an internship?
You are responsible for finding your own internship. The idea is that this is a “dry run” for the job-hunting you will do after school. The BridgeLab Career Center is here to help you get started with tactics and strategy. Here are some general suggestions:

• Search for pre-existing opportunities
  o Hunt for internship postings on JobWorks. Simply navigate to PNCA.edu/JobWorks and start using your account. As you do so, exercise common sense and do your research to make sure that all opportunities meet PNCA criteria. Speak with your Department Chair and BridgeLab Career Center if you have questions.
  o Research on the websites of organizations that interest you. Some organizations list sections about internships directly on their websites.

• Create your own opportunity: Get suggestions from your professors, classmates, and from BridgeLab Career Center. If a particular site doesn’t have a posted opportunity, contact them and ask if they’d be willing to take you on as an intern. Many internships at PNCA are set up through this kind of proactive undertaking.

What exactly should I expect to do at my internship?
Your internship should offer work opportunities that enrich your education and provide substantive work. That doesn’t mean you’ll always be doing the highest tier of work at the site, of course, but it means that I want you to be involved in the day-to-day activities in a real and meaningful way. That will be different for every internship, and it is your responsibility to speak directly with the internship site about what you expect to learn and do. That will be formalized in the Learning Contract you turn in to PNCA before you register for the internship, but it should also be discussed during an early interview phase before you commit to the internship. The Learning Contract needs the agreement of many parties, including your Chair and the Director of BridgeLab Career

Revised 4/15
Center, so it’s important to include them in the process early on rather than assuming that they’ll agree.

**What is the initial application process?**
Before registering with BridgeLab Career Center, you will need to get an internship by applying directly to the site. Every internship is different, so follow the instructions provided by your internship site. In most cases, there will be one or more phases conducted over email or on paper before you meet in person.

**Will I need to interview?**
Yes, nearly all internships will require an interview – and moreover, interviews benefit you immensely. Consider this an opportunity to interview them as well and ensure the internship is a good fit.

**Does BridgeLab Career Center administer Communication Design and MFA internships?**
Yes and no. BridgeLab Career Center now administers CD441, the Communication Design Practicum, in addition to the ND internships done by BFA students in other majors. **MFA and MA students work directly with their Department Chairs to set up the credit-bearing part of the internship.** BridgeLab Career Center is here as an additional support system, but MFA/MA students must work directly with their Chairs.

**Does BridgeLab Career Center administer the Continuing Education Youth Program Art Education Practicum?**
Yes. Sara Kaltwasser directs that program in concert with BridgeLab Career Center.

**I’m confused about application materials. What should I do?**
BridgeLab Career Center and ARC (The Academic Resource Center) are here to help you with application materials with the following resources:

- Visit the [BridgeLab Career Center Homeroom site](#) for info to get you started on application materials (there are lots of handy fact-sheets and packets)
- Attend a [BridgeLab Career Center Workshop](#) (the calendar is on the Homeroom site)
- Make an appointment with a [BridgeLab Career Center or an ARC Peer Consultant](#) to go over your application materials

**I’d like to read the Course Syllabus for the internship. Where is it?**
For all the paperwork related to your internship, including the Course Syllabus (which contains deadlines) and all other materials, non-CD majors should visit the [Internship Homeroom site](#) correlating to the semester in which you hope to do the internship. CD Majors should visit the Homeroom site entitled CD441.

**I have landed an internship! What steps do I take to formalize it with PNCA?**
Congratulations! Now that you’ve landed the internship, read the entire Internship Syllabus and follow the instructions precisely. If you decide that credit is right for you, be sure to register for the internship officially before it begins and follow all the guidelines. Note that you cannot receive retroactive credit for internships.

*Any questions? Contact bridgelab@pnca.edu for details!*

*Revised 4/15*