

Everything You Need to Know about I-O Internships: Follow-Up Responses for Undergraduate and High School Level Internships

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In December 2003, SIOP's Education and Training Committee conducted a survey to investigate all types of applied experiences (e.g., paid and unpaid experiences, internships, co-ops, practicums, etc.) available to graduate students interested in I-O psychology. The results of this survey were published on SIOP's Web site and in the July 2004 issue of *TIP* (Munson, Phillips, Clark, & Mueller-Hanson, 2004). Several respondents to this initial survey indicated that they provided internship opportunities for undergraduate and high school students. These individuals were contacted in the spring of 2004 in a follow-up study to gather additional information about opportunities at the undergraduate and high school level. Four individuals responded to a brief e-mail survey regarding undergraduate internships, and one individual was interviewed via phone regarding high school internships. Because of the small number of respondents, the results are presented as a high-level overview of potential issues and recommendations for organizations and internship seekers.

Intern Recruitment and Selection

As with graduate internship opportunities, recruiting efforts for undergraduate and high school interns primarily rely on networking with faculty at local schools and career centers. Although recruitment for graduate internships tended to be formal, efforts at the lower levels tended to be more informal and relied almost extensively on word of mouth.

Organizations selecting undergraduate and high school level interns use a variety of selection assessments. Most respondents indicated they use phone and/or face-to-face interviews. These interviews are typically coupled with one or more other assessments such as personality tests, cognitive ability tests, situational tests, work samples, and screened application blanks. Organizations selecting high school interns may also find it useful to conduct interviews with personal references. Students at this level are unlikely to have previous job experiences, and personal references may provide insight into the candidates' abilities.

The KSAs considered when selecting undergraduate level interns are similar to those considered when selecting graduate interns, such as communica-

tion (oral and written), teamwork and interpersonal skills, basic statistical skills, and project management skills. However, KSAOs for high school internships were focused less on "technical skills" and more on maturity, teamwork, initiative, dependability, and time management skills. High school interns who typically do not succeed are those who are unable to handle the responsibility of working in an adult setting and who are unable to be self-directed.

Organizations hiring both undergraduates and high school interns tend not to be concerned with the education level of the candidate. However, academic performance was a consideration in some cases; half the respondents indicated that the minimum overall GPA required for interns was 3.0.

Intern Responsibilities and Working Conditions

At the graduate level, some of the most frequently cited intern responsibilities were data analysis and the development of training and selection instruments. At the undergraduate level, respondents indicated that interns tend to spend most of their time on library research, project management activities, data entry, data analysis, and data collection. These tasks are typically performed in close consultation with the intern's supervisor or a more senior staff member. All respondents indicated that interns receive feedback about their performance—either formally, informally, or both.

At the high school level, more care and supervision is necessary to match the tasks and assignments to the abilities of the intern. Interns at this level will work in close contact with a supervisor or senior consultants and typically receive both formal and informal feedback. Typical tasks may include business administration activities, data entry, and test administration.

Typical salaries at the undergraduate level average \$8–\$10 an hour (compared with \$18–\$20 an hour at the graduate level). Respondents indicated that undergraduate-level interns usually earn few benefits; when benefits are offered, they generally are limited to training and tuition assistance. Undergraduate-level internships are typically short in duration (averaging 3 months) and entail 10–25 hours of work per week. The one respondent who offered high school internships indicated that the typical salaries ranged from \$7–10 an hour, however, formal benefits were not offered (e.g., training, conference attendance, tuition assistance).

Advice for Prospective Interns

When seeking internships at these levels, our advice is to do your homework. Start with organizations with established programs for graduate interns and investigate whether they would be willing to take on a more junior student. In addition, look for organizations that offer scholarships—many scholarships come with internship opportunities.

As an undergraduate be prepared to demonstrate your communication, interpersonal, and basic statistical skills along with some knowledge in the I-O field—either through coursework or previous experiences. As a high school student, less emphasis will be placed on your technical skills; however, dependability, maturity, and ability to meet the demands of working in a professional environment will be critical.

These internships, although harder to find, provide the opportunity to learn from experienced I-O psychologists and can help inform your future career choices. In addition, the relationships you build can pay rich dividends during the graduate school application process and later in your career. Some extra cash and tuition assistance are always helpful, but good advice and strong letters of recommendation are priceless!

References

Munsun, L. J., Phillips, G. Clark, C. C., & Mueller-Hanson, R. A. (2004). Everything you need to know about I-O internships: Results from the 2003 SIOP Internship Survey. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 42, 117-126.

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