Internship programme

WHO is committed to building future leaders in public health and WHO’s internship programme provides a wide range of opportunities for graduate and postgraduate students to gain insight into the work of WHO.

Definition of an intern at WHO

An intern is a student who is enrolled in a course of study at a university or equivalent institution (graduate or postgraduate); who has completed three years of full-time study at a university or equivalent institution; and who provides his/her services to the World Health Organization without remuneration. Interns do not have the status of WHO staff members and cannot represent the Organization in any official capacity.

Objectives of the programme

The objectives of the internship programme are to:

- provide a framework for assigning students from diverse academic backgrounds to WHO programmes, where their educational experience can be enhanced through practical assignments;
- expose students to the work of WHO; and
- provide WHO programmes with input from students specializing in various fields. Most students are placed in health-related programmes, although other disciplines can be considered as appropriate.

Eligibility criteria

WHO may accept applications from those who meet all of the following conditions:

- The applicant is at least 20 years of age on the date of application.
- The applicant is enrolled in a course of study at a university or equivalent institution leading to a formal qualification (graduate or postgraduate). Applicants who apply for an internship within six months of completion of their formal qualification may also be considered.
- The applicant has completed three years of full-time study at a university or equivalent institution prior to commencing the internship.
- The intern is available for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of three months. Exceptionally, through the approvals of the Head of the Technical Unit and the Director of the
Division the internship period may be extended up to six months to respond to special academic requirements or particular needs of the receiving programme.

- The applicant is fluent in at least one of the working languages of the office of the assignment.
- The applicant is not related to a WHO staff member as defined in staff rule 410.3 (e.g., son/daughter, brother/sister, or mother/father).
- The applicant has not previously participated in WHO’s internship programme.

**Conditions of internship**

WHO internships are not paid. Travel costs, travel arrangements, including visas, and living accommodation are the responsibility of the intern or their sponsoring institution.

**Employment**

Interns shall not take up any form of contractual arrangement with the Organization as a staff member or no-staff member for a period of three months following the end of the internship. Any employment with WHO shall be subject to established recruitment and selection procedures.

**Agreements**

WHO does not agree to execute any agreement proposed or required by a sponsor, university or equivalent institution. By signing the Official Letter of Internship, interns confirm that they or their sponsor (university, institute, etc.) will meet all expenses for travel and subsistence and that they have adequate health insurance coverage, which includes coverage for the country of the assignment.

However, a certificate of attendance from the Organization and/or letter of recommendation from the WHO staff member who supervised the intern can be provided.

**Termination**

Either the Organization or the intern may end the internship before its completion, normally with one week’s notice.

When offering an internship, the receiving programme agrees to:
- Ensure that an intern’s assignment is related to his/her field of study, meaningful for both the programme and the intern, and at the appropriate level of complexity and variety;
- Provide a description of the assignment to be undertaken specifying objectives and tasks (i.e. terms of reference);
- Review progress regularly and provide adequate feedback and coaching/mentoring during the internship;
- Provide office accommodation and related support facilities to enable the intern to undertake the assignment; and
- At the end of the internship, prepare a written evaluation of the intern’s performance and provide the intern with feedback.

Official travel

While official travel is not encouraged, interns may exceptionally be required to travel to accompany a staff member on official travel to locations with a security rating no higher than Phase I. In such cases, the technical unit must ensure appropriate administrative action is taken to facilitate the official travel of the intern for the period concerned and also ensure that the intern provides adequate health insurance coverage for the country of destination.

Security clearance

The technical unit is requested to issue security clearance for all interns, whether national or international. International interns staying on for more than three months will have a security briefing with the UNDP Security Officer.

When accepting an internship, interns agree to provide the following documents:

- Most recent detailed CV (including contact number, valid e-mail, education and experience)
- Copy of ID and valid passport
- Copy of university/institute credentials
- Proof of health care coverage.

When accepting an internship, interns agree to the following conditions:

- Conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the standards of conduct expected of a person working in an international environment in a specialized agency of the United Nations system;
- Refrain from any conduct that would adversely reflect on WHO or on the receiving department and not engage in any activity which is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the Organization;
- Provide the receiving programme with a copy of all materials prepared during the internship. Interns may not disclose or make use of any unpublished or confidential information that comes to their knowledge in the course of their internship. The provisions relating to texts prepared for publication apply also to interns; and
- Submit a written report on the work they have undertaken during their assignment at the end of the internship to be reviewed by the supervisor and other interested parties.
- Submit a certificate of basic and advanced security tests, which they will take at the beginning of their internship.

Frequently asked questions

How can I apply for an internship?

Please send a detailed personal history form, including educational and practical experience, and a covering letter indicating areas of interest to the following e-mail address: emrgohrsintern@who.int. The Regional Office accepts applications throughout the year.

Web site of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean: http://www.emro.who.int

When to expect a reply on your application

You should expect to receive a reply within 45 working days of receipt of your internship application.

Should I arrange an interview?

No, WHO will contact you if you have been selected for an interview. Nor is it necessary or advised that intern applicants send school or other documents to WHO. If and when selected, the technical unit may ask for these supporting documents.
If I am accepted, what kind of work will I be doing?

This will depend on the needs of the office to which you are assigned, your qualifications and interests.

How long is the WHO internship programme?

For the internship to be worthwhile and effective, interns will be accepted for a minimum of 6 weeks and a maximum of 3 months. Exceptionally, an internship may be extended with agreement from the technical unit concerned but cannot be longer than 6 months in duration.

Can I get financial support from WHO?

WHO does not provide financial support for interns. All successful applicants are expected to make their own arrangements for travel, lodging and living expenses during the internship period. There are a number of resources for supporting internships. Start the search at your own university.

Do I need to be at the WHO office full-time?

Internships at WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and country offices are full time and interns are expected to work Sunday to Thursday, 08:00 to 4:00 for the duration of the internship. Days of the week and hours may vary from country to country.

Is an intern entitled to sick leave?
An intern is not expected to work if he/she is unwell but it is important that the supervisor be informed of any absences. Any expense relating to illness is the responsibility of the intern. Especially long periods of absence, through illness or for other reasons, should be recorded in the written performance evaluation prepared by the supervisor at the end of the assignment.

Is an intern entitled to annual leave?

No. The duration of the internship should not be interrupted. Time off may be exceptionally granted by the supervisor as long as the assignment is not adversely affected.

Will travel expenses to and from the duty station be reimbursed by WHO?

No, travel expenses are the responsibility of the intern.

Is the intern entitled to a per diem payment to cover expenses incurred during the internship or while working as a volunteer?

No, interns are not paid.

Will WHO provide assistance in finding suitable accommodation?

WHO is unable to provide help in finding accommodation and the Organization does not cover any costs for living expenses during the assignment.

Is there anything else I should know?
The WHO Internship programme is not connected with WHO employment activities and there should be no expectation of such. Interns cannot apply for posts advertised internally to WHO staff during the period of their internship and for three months following the end of their internship. Publication of Information: No papers or reports may be published based on information obtained from WHO during the internship.