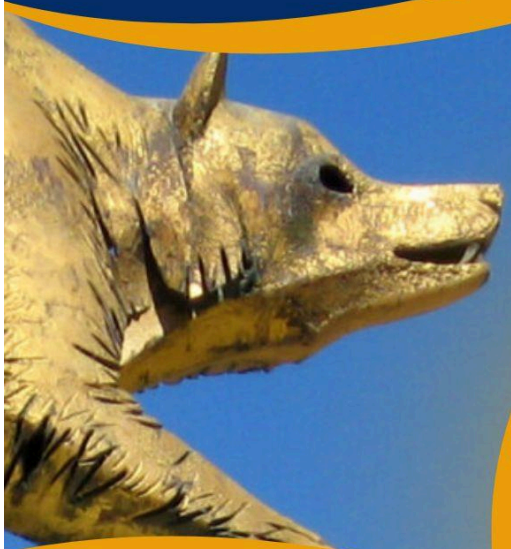
CAREER COMPETENCIES TOOLKIT



UC Berkeley
Career Engagement

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INTERNSHIP DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

FOR EMPLOYERS

Why Career Competencies?

The NACE Career Readiness Competencies provide a framework that connects academic, co-curricular, and professional experiences with the skills students need to be successful in their careers. The competencies serve as a bridge between academic learning and professional development, fostering a holistic approach to preparing students for life after college.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help employers create and sustain high-quality internship programs. It provides actionable strategies for embedding career competencies into intern engagement, particularly as students transition into the workforce. By applying these competencies and proven practices, you can design internships that clearly communicate expectations, support professional growth, and enhance overall program impact. Use this resource to guide interns in reflecting on their experiences, articulating their skills to future employers, and gaining confidence as emerging professionals.

Format

Each section defines the competency and provides specific examples, tips, and suggestions for your discussions with Interns. The toolkit includes QR codes and Berkeley Career Engagement resources for easy access. We're here to support you and your Internship programs!

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AI disclosure: This document was reviewed using AI (Chat GPT) to correct spelling and grammar and to refine language for clarity and brevity.

Career & Self-Development

Definition: Career and self-development involve understanding one's unique interests, strengths, values, and goals, exploring career paths that align with these, and seeking opportunities to grow personally and professionally. It also involves building meaningful relationships that support one's journey on campus, in the workplace, and beyond.

In Practice:

- **Creating an internship or job posting:** Highlight opportunities for skill development, mentorship, and feedback from supervisors or senior staff.

- **Onboarding:** Supplement job training with guidance on professional growth. Share career path options, development resources, and cross-departmental connections.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Hold regular one-on-one meetings to track goals, give feedback, share industry insights, and recommend skill-building activities.

- **Capstone/ending well:** End with a meeting to review accomplishments, reflect on growth, and discuss how to present achievements in resumes or portfolios. Gather intern feedback to strengthen the program.

Tip: Interns want to know that their employer cares about their development. Encourage them to take initiative to explore what genuinely interests them, make connections with others in the organization, ask for feedback and advice, and seek out opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in keeping with both the organization's needs and their career aspirations.

How to Support Interns in Building Career & Self-Development:

1. **Create growth experiences.** Provide opportunities that build both professional skills and personal confidence. Help them maximize their effectiveness in their current role and in collaboration with others, and gain exposure to other parts of the organization.

2. **Encourage career exploration.** Support interns in learning about industry options and potential next steps, including paths within your organization. Share resources and facilitate introductions to expand their perspective.

3. **Provide timely, constructive feedback.** Schedule regular check-ins rather than waiting until the end of the internship. Recognize strengths before suggesting improvements, and invite reflection on what's working and what could be done differently. Be clear and specific with input, tie it to their overall professional development, and close on a positive note.

Critical Thinking:

Definition: More than just applying theories or tools, critical thinking involves analyzing information, questioning assumptions, identifying biases, and considering multiple perspectives to form reasoned, well-informed judgments.

In Practice:

- **Creating a job posting:** List "critical thinking" as a preferred (or required) qualification, and include a concrete example of how the role develops or relies on this skill.

- **Onboarding:** Explain how projects may require thinking beyond standard procedures, using different approaches to improve outcomes, an element that may be reflected in their internship evaluation.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Use check-ins to explore their decision-making process. Ask what alternatives they considered, what perspectives they applied, and how they evaluated various sources of information.

- **Capstone/ ending well:** Encourage reflection on how their thinking has evolved. What changed in how they approach questions or challenges? What surprised them about their own analysis, and what helped them see the work from a broader perspective?

Tip: In a time of constant change, where past solutions may no longer apply, how can you guide an intern to approach a project with greater nuance and a more holistic perspective, ultimately preparing them to navigate future professional challenges more effectively?

How to Support Interns in Developing Critical Thinking:

1. **Encourage Openness to Feedback:** Support interns in questioning their initial assumptions and gaining a broader perspective on the object of their assignment; who might they seek out who would approach the problem differently?

2. **Prompt them to ask "Why?" and "What's the Evidence?"** Encourage interns to *question assumptions*—their own and others'.

3. **Engage in Structured Reflection.** Suggest that interns take time after key tasks or projects to reflect: What did I learn? What worked and what didn't? How could I approach this differently next time?

4. **Break Down Problems Systematically -** Encourage interns to disaggregate complex problems into smaller parts: Define the problem clearly, identify relevant information, and consider a range of solutions and possible outcomes.

Communication

Definition: The process of clearly sharing information, ideas, emotions, or thoughts between individuals or groups. It can occur through spoken words, writing, body language, or visual cues, and relies on effective delivery and interpretation across various media.

In Practice

- **Develop a Communication Schematic:** Clearly explain the different communication modes used in your organization. Set expectations early around tools, workflows, and levels of formality. Are there specific platforms for general updates? Are informal channels commonly used or more effective? Making these norms explicit helps interns communicate professionally and promptly.

- **Model Conscientiousness:** Understand the broader context of workplace communication and model the appropriate tone, medium, and frequency. Recognize that interns may be navigating professional communication for the first time, extend grace, and offer clear examples.

- **Reinforce Expectations:** Interns may not immediately grasp how to apply personalized feedback. Revisit communication expectations regularly to support growth and foster more effective collaboration.

- **Practice Active Listening:** Communication is two-way. Stay present in conversations, mirror key points to confirm understanding, and encourage interns to do the same. This builds confidence and engagement in professional dialogue.

Tip: Communication builds trust and reinforces relationships. Helping students understand how to adapt to different personalities, needs, and circumstances will help them grow professionally.

How to Support Interns in Understanding Communication in Practice:

1. **Email/Internet:** Provide templates for common requests or communications to help interns share information clearly and efficiently. Review and refine language together to ensure appropriate tone and concise wording.

2. **Presentations:** Support interns in organizing their thoughts, managing tone and posture, and ensuring logical flow between topics. Encourage practice—individually or with peers—to build confidence and clarity.

3. **Phone Communication:** Like presenting, phone communication requires clarity, context-appropriate language, and a neutral tone. Once expectations are internalized, encourage interns to bring their personality into professional conversations.

Equity and Inclusion

Definition: Cultivate the awareness, mindset, knowledge, and skills to engage respectfully and effectively with people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Demonstrating this competency includes practicing anti-racism by actively challenging systems, structures, and policies that uphold racial inequity.

In Practice:

- **Creating a job posting:** Post internship opportunities for free on Handshake. Promote equity by offering paid internships, ensuring access for students regardless of financial background, and fostering a more inclusive program.

- **Onboarding:** Communicate your organization's commitment to equity and diversity. Use diverse interview panels to bring varied perspectives and reduce bias. Include a DEI overview in onboarding—HR-led sessions are a great way to show how your organization lives its values.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Create individualized supervision plans and ensure all interns have equal access to training and growth opportunities. Equitable supervision supports professional development for everyone.

- **Capstone/ ending well:** Provide space for interns to present their work. Conduct exit interviews to gather feedback on their contributions and experience, helping to improve the program and support continuous learning.

Tip: By forming recruiting teams that establish a "pipeline program" with universities that have large populations of underrepresented students, companies can put policy into practice.

How to Support Equity with Student Interns:

1. **Offer Scholarships:** Support interns by pairing a scholarship with your internship program. This is a great way to attract students from a variety of backgrounds and diversify your internship program.

2. **Provide Housing and Relocation Assistance:** At a minimum, you should offer assistance to your interns and new hires with locating affordable housing.

3. **Empower your Interns:** Ensure interns are aware of resources for professional development and growth, and know how to access them.

Leadership

Definition: Effective leadership inspires and motivates a team through a shared vision. Leaders leverage team strengths to achieve collective goals, innovate for better outcomes, and provide structure by planning, organizing, and guiding efforts.

In Practice:

- **Creating a job posting:** Include leadership skills that will be heightened through the opportunity, and clearly state what skills interns should bring and how they'll develop leadership during the internship.

- **Onboarding:** Model strong leadership: communicate clearly, set expectations, demonstrate cultural awareness, and lead by example.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Make leadership a regular topic in check-ins. Identify interns who demonstrate leadership and consider how to reward and foster this quality; conversely, think about how to remove roadblocks for interns who aren't yet showing leadership qualities and are hesitant to take on leadership roles. Ask how you can support reluctant interns.

- **Capstone/ ending well:** Help interns reflect on their leadership growth through self-assessment, goals reached at milestone points in their internship, and concrete examples to highlight. Provide feedback and suggestions for continued development.

Tip: A leader asks, "How can we succeed together?"

How to Support Interns in Developing Leadership:

1. **Build Emotional Intelligence:** Help interns assess and strengthen their empathy, communication, and ability to motivate others—key traits of strong leaders.

2. **Develop Leadership Skills:** Introduce various leadership styles and help interns identify their strengths. Encourage growth through tools like project management software and normalize the idea that leadership skills can be learned.

3. **Encourage Inclusive Leadership:** Create a safe, supportive environment for all interns, avoiding labels and offering accommodations to foster diverse leadership.

4. **Practice Communication and Facilitation:** Offer opportunities to lead meetings with a focus on respectful and clear communication. Give feedback and space for reflection to build confidence and tact.

5. **Foster Peer Leadership and Mentorship:** Encourage interns to reflect on their areas of greatest competence and pair them with others to promote mutual learning and leadership through mentoring.

Professionalism

Definition: Professionalism means adapting to the workplace, demonstrating strong work habits, and acting with integrity and accountability. It includes being dependable, prepared, respectful, communicative, goal-oriented, and engaged.

In Practice:

- **Creating a job posting:** Include a brief note that interns will gain professional skills and receive mentorship in workplace conduct.

- **Onboarding:** Clearly explain your organization's professionalism standards (and the why behind them), and how interns will be evaluated.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Reflect on your organization's professionalism standards, including implicit expectations, and ensure they are inclusive. Regularly discuss professionalism in supervision sessions, providing specific behavior-based feedback framed as growth opportunities. Communicate with clarity, empathy, and support, explaining the rationale behind standards to help interns understand and align with them.

- **Capstone/ ending well:** Guide interns in reflecting on how they've grown professionally. Use self-assessments and concrete examples. Offer suggestions for continued development.

Tip: Professionalism blends authenticity with courtesy. Encourage interns to view it not as a performance, but as an opportunity to demonstrate respect, reliability, and capability. Remind them that professionalism varies by culture and context, and that team members model it daily through their actions.

How to Support Student Interns in Developing Professionalism:

1. **Encourage Openness to Feedback:** Support interns in seeking input on how they communicate, show reliability, and engage with others—prompt reflection on how they demonstrate professionalism in group settings.

2. **Discuss Professional Appearance:** Remind interns that professionalism includes thoughtful appearance without erasing culture. Bold colors, cultural hairstyles, and expressive clothing can be professional. Encourage them to find role models and view appearance as a sign of respect for themselves and others.

3. **Model and Reinforce Punctuality:** Many Berkeley students are accustomed to "Berkeley Time," where classes often start 10 minutes late. Remind interns that most workplaces value punctuality. Be clear, supportive, and offer time management strategies if needed.

Teamwork

Definition: Teamwork involves building and maintaining collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals while valuing diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities. Team projects can foster pride, ownership, and motivation.

In Practice:

- **Creating a job posting:** Describe your company's culture of collaboration, including your team's values, work environment, and collaboration tools. Be sure to provide examples and metrics.

- **Onboarding:** Define clear roles and expectations by clearly outlining new hires' responsibilities, reporting structure, and how their roles contribute to the overall team. Teams often leverage and learn new project management tools like Asana or Trello.

- **Ongoing supervision:** Lead by example and demonstrate collaboration and enthusiasm for team projects. Provide opportunities for interns/employees to make decisions and take on larger roles, fostering collaboration.

- **Capstone/ending well:** A key aspect of a capstone project is that participants collaborate as a team to create something more substantial than a standalone project.

Tip: Identify the existing needs within your organization to leverage for the Capstone project, helping students integrate their skills and knowledge.

How to support interns in developing Teamwork:

1. **Shared Goals and Milestones:** Help establish milestones and goals to ensure the interns are on the same page and are working toward a common objective.

2. **Regular Meetings:** Establish and ensure frequent team meetings to discuss progress, challenges, and address obstacles. The intern coordinator should be available and attend as well to help navigate any issues or challenges.

3. **Collaboration Tools:** Collaborate with the team to identify project needs and resources for their work. Make collaboration tools and software available to increase skill-building and collaboration.

4. **Mentorship and Support:** Connecting interns with industry advisors, mentors, and Alumni is an effective way to provide guidance and support while building collaboration and teamwork skills.

Technology

Definition: Technology as a skill means being able to leverage technical tools ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. Technology skills are relevant to all types of roles because technology is the application of scientific knowledge for scientific purposes. It makes a difference in the speed and proficiency of practical tasks assigned.

In Practice:

- **Instant Messaging:** Most interns are familiar with instant messaging tools such as GChat, Slack, and Teams. Each comes with its suite of functional options, and understanding how these can be useful in different contexts can help you, your teams, and your organization function more efficiently and effectively in real-time.

- **Data Analysis and Visualization:** Data insights are one of the biggest differentiators in effectiveness within Knowledge Work. Support your intern's data work by providing them with proper software and training on said software to produce visualizations that help your organization make decisions for the future.

- **Physical Technology:** In-person handling protocols are a necessity when using physical technologies. Give your intern the time and space to become comfortable with these tools, and oversee their work to ensure that safety precautions are ingrained.

How to Support Interns in Developing Technology Skills:

1. **Level-Setting:** Introduce interns to the key technologies your organization uses, allowing time to become comfortable with their practical application in work tasks.

2. **Prime for Creativity:** After covering basics, invite interns to suggest improvements or new ways to use technology. Encouraging innovation benefits both the intern and the organization.

3. **Safety First:** Inform interns about common pitfalls and risks associated with your tools, as well as their broader organizational and industry impacts.

4. **Identify Transferrable Skills:** Help interns connect their existing tech skills to your tools, emphasizing how adaptable abilities support learning new technologies and add value to your team.

Resources & Information

Engage with Us

UC Berkeley Career Engagement Website:

Employers Landing Page

Recruit at Cal

Employer Policies

- **Offer Guidelines**
- **DEI Best Practices**
- **Internship Best Practices**

Post jobs on **Handshake**

- **MBA**
- **Berkeley Law**

Cal Job Shadow Program

Information Sessions

Parker Dewey Micro-Internships

Resume Books

Targeted Student Emails

Volunteer Opportunities

Partner with Student Orgs

Sponsorship Opportunities

Berkeley Circle

Data & Resources

Where do Cal grads go?

Career Fair Attendance dashboard

Past Career Fair directories

Recruiting Calendar

Student enrollment dashboard