
PRCA **Intern** **Guidelines**

Compiled by the PRCA
and its members



PRCA Intern Guidelines

Compiled by the PRCA and its members
for the public relations and communications
industry and for aspiring PR interns

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The PRCA Intern Guidelines fulfil Section 4 recommendation 5 of the PRCA Access Commission:

“Section 4 – Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

5) PRCA to draft specific guidelines for member companies on the recruitment and employment of PR interns.”

The Guidelines also form part of the PRCA’s wider campaign to end unpaid internships in the Public Relations and Communications industry, launch by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in October 2011.

To find out more about the PRCA’s intern campaign please visit:

www.prca.org.uk/intern_campaign

Introduction to the PRCA Intern Guidelines

Francis Ingham MPRCA,
PRCA Director General



Francis Ingham MPRCA,
PRCA Director General

But internships must be paid. This is a moral and a legal obligation...

Welcome to the PRCA Intern Guidelines, produced by the PRCA and its members.

These Guidelines are aimed at our members, the wider public relations and communications industry, and for aspiring interns who want to enter our industry.

The PRCA Intern Guidelines form part of our wider intern campaign to end unpaid internships in the PR industry. They fulfil a commitment recommended by our Access Commission earlier this year. Our intern campaign continues to grow, and we are proud of the way our profession has taken on the challenge to end unpaid internships. At the same time, there is still a long way for us all to go. Results from our survey conducted with Intern Aware revealed that over 70% of internships in public relations and communications remain unpaid.

The short-term benefits of free labour are greatly outweighed by the way that this practice devalues our expertise and reputation. It is unfair to ask young people to work for free, just so that in the short term organisations can benefit financially. Public relations professionals provide valuable counsel and should be prepared to pay those who contribute accordingly. I believe passionately that we can set an example to other industries on how our young workforce should be treated. As our Guidelines point out: interns are workers, not volunteers!

The 2011 PRCA/PRWeek Census showed that public relations is a very young industry that is still growing, with 43% of the UK PR workforce under the age of 25. So we must ask the question: "What is our excuse for not paying our interns?" In truth there should be no excuse.

The PRCA is not looking to end all forms of unpaid work. And our Guidelines explicitly state the differences between internships and other types of work experience.

But internships must be paid. This is a moral and a legal obligation. National Minimum Wage legislation states that all 'workers' in the UK that are older than the compulsory school leaving age have an entitlement to be paid at least National Minimum Wage. The PRCA is strictly against the practice of labelling interns as volunteers in order to avoid this obligation.

Our Guidelines are also a must read for future interns. Remember that the more seriously you take your internship, the more you will get out of it. Most organisations hire interns in good faith, looking to provide you with practical experience and to find the next generation of talent to take our profession forward. It is up to you to make the most of this opportunity.

My thanks go to those who made these Guidelines possible, and especially to Intern Aware and the Taylor Bennett Foundation for their guest sections.

Public relations is proving to be a real economic success story even in these tough times. It is now our duty, and our responsibility, to attract the very brightest talent, regardless of background – and to remove the barriers to accessing our industry that unpaid internships are creating.

The PRCA/Intern Aware 'Internships in PR and Public Affairs' Survey

Ben Lyons, Fishburn Hedges
and Intern Aware



40%

of internships lasted
over three months,
with some even lasting
longer than a year

**Unpaid internships
aren't just wrong,
they're bad for
business...**

Internships have become a fact of life for today's graduates. While only a few years ago businesses would welcome motivated young people with good degrees, they now expect the practical skills that come from months spent in a workplace. The problem is that many of these opportunities are unpaid, putting them out of reach of young people who can't rely on the Bank of Mum and Dad.

PR is no different. The PRCA/Intern Aware survey of the industry finds that internships are essential for people looking to start a career in communications, but are inaccessible to the many who can't afford to work for free.

Firms are shown to clearly value the experiences that young people gained while interning, with over half (52%) of respondents giving internships a score of 5 out of 5 for value when applying for an entry level role. However, internships are often lengthy and expensive to complete. Over half (53%) of PR interns have needed to take more than one internship, with 14% having taken four or five. Two-fifths (40%) of internships lasted over three months, with some even lasting longer than a year.

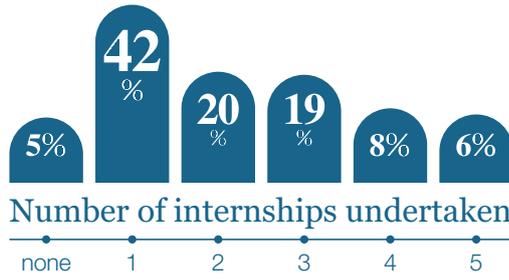
Affordability is the big issue with over 70% of interns paid nothing or at a rate below the statutory National Minimum Wage. With figures like these it comes as no surprise that the most common reason for not taking an internship was an inability to afford the cost (32%) and as many as three quarters (75%) of interns require financial assistance, usually from parents. This non-compliance with the Minimum Wage could also expose large sections of the industry to the risk of prosecution, where interns are performing the role of a "worker".

But this isn't just bad news for young people being priced out of their chosen careers, it is bad for our industry as a whole. Away from Intern Aware, I work at communications agency Fishburn Hedges and can see how fast PR is changing. It may be clichéd, but we all know that young people bring energy and new ideas to our firms, as well as an intuitive understanding of social and digital communications. And we will find it much harder to communicate to our publics if our industry solely consists of white middle class people from London and the Home Counties.

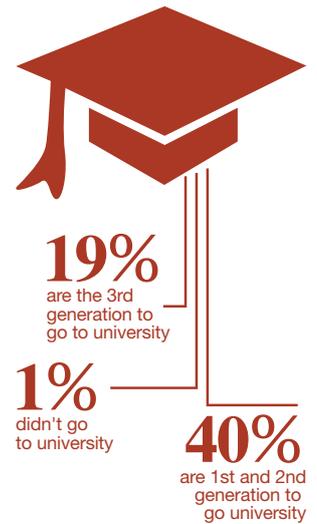
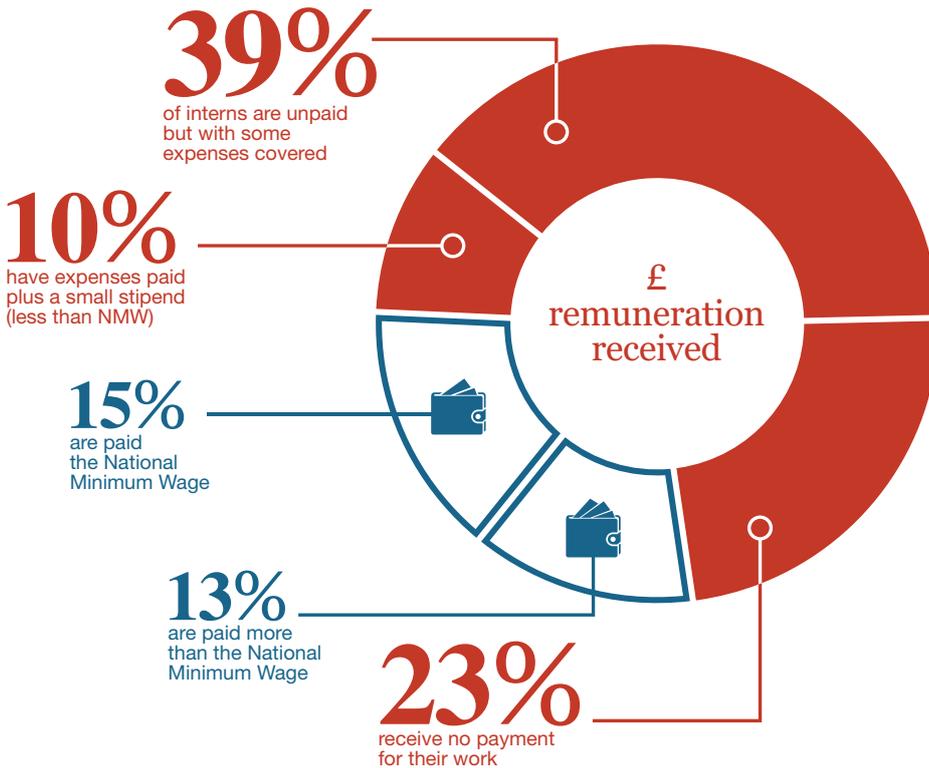
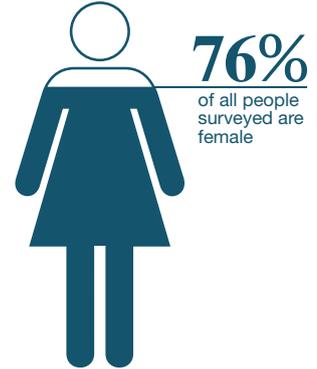
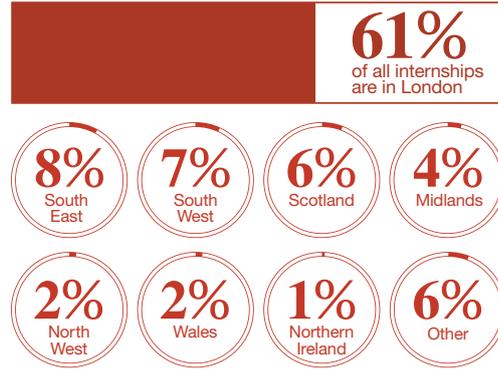
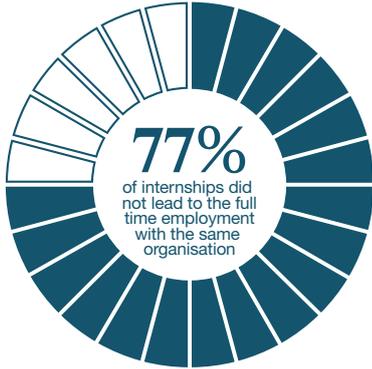
The PRCA understand this. They are leading the way with an impressive campaign and strong guidelines on what constitutes a good internship. Smart PRCA members will sign up to the campaign because unpaid internships aren't just wrong, they're bad for business.

INTERNSHIPS IN PR AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

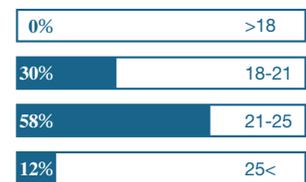
prca.org.uk
internaware.org



3/4
are White British



Age group



52%
rate internships 5 out of 5 for importance in entering the industry



33%
of the surveyed said they could not afford internship

Section 1: Internships – Definition and Remuneration

The PRCA Internship Campaign

75

Currently there are over 75 consultancy members of the PRCA that have joined the campaign

The PR industry is – more than anything – about people...

An internship is the most common form of professional experience gained by an individual in a relevant organisation as a start to their career in a specific industry. However, internships in the public relations and communications industry cannot be seen as an activity that just benefits the individual.

Interns are increasingly required to perform work of demonstrable value for their employers. The response of the industry must be to recognise the value and commitment interns bring to their workplace. Interns are workers who must be paid accordingly; it is unacceptable not to do so.

An internship is the most common form of professional experience gained by an individual in a relevant organisation as a start to their career in a specific industry. However, internships in the public relations and communications industry cannot be seen as an activity that just benefits the individual. Interns are increasingly required to perform work of demonstrable value for their employers. The response of the industry must be to recognise the value and commitment interns bring to their workplace. Interns are workers who must be paid accordingly; it is unacceptable not to do so.

This is why the PRCA launched its Internship Campaign last year to increase the number of consultancies that pay their interns at least the National Minimum Wage. Currently there are over 75 consultancies members of the PRCA that have joined the campaign. To find out more and to see which agencies have joined up, please visit www.prca.org.uk/intern_campaign

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg commented on the campaign in October 2011:

“The PR industry is – more than anything – about people. Pitches and press releases are only as good as the individuals behind them. In an ever more competitive industry, it’s innovation that gives you the edge.

But where does your fresh talent come from? The interns and work experience staff who rise through the ranks – are they the best of the best? Or are they just friends of friends? The account manager’s son or daughter?

The fact is, workplaces across Britain desperately need to be opened up, and PR is no exception. Too often it’s who you know – not what you know – that counts. But in a truly fair and open society ability trumps privilege – not just because it’s right, but because it’s good for business too.”

Section 1: Internships – Definition and Remuneration The PRCA Internship Campaign

Continued...

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a non-voluntary, contractual form of work experience – but it is often incorrectly treated as voluntary, non-contractual work experience, even when interns are contributing substantive work for organisations. High quality internships will be beneficial to both the intern and the employer. It will benefit the intern if it gives them experience performing duties that act as relevant preparation for future jobs. It will be of benefit to the employer if the intern positively contributes to the business by improving productivity, as well as potentially becoming a new member of staff.

Internships should rarely be shorter than four weeks, and no longer than six months.

WHAT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is not voluntary work experience. The vast majority of internships are taken by graduates who are no longer in full-time education, or university students during their summer holidays. An intern should not consider itself a volunteer but an employee. Voluntary work experience tends to be taken by younger students as a taster to help them understand a new industry before deciding their chosen career path. Voluntary workers can work when they please and do not require a contract. Many interns are unfairly treated as work experience volunteers.

‘Voluntary internships’ are a misnomer that should not be used when advertising for an intern position.

An internship is not a placement that forms a compulsory component to further education or a higher education course. An internship is not work shadowing, which normally lasts no longer than a few weeks and involves no work-related duties, but just observation of an organisation’s employee.

HOW MUCH SHOULD INTERNS BE PAID?

As stated above, interns differentiate themselves by performing work and possessing duties that contribute to an organisation’s productivity, including billable work for clients.

National Minimum Wage legislation states that all ‘workers’ in the UK that are older than the compulsory school leaving age have an entitlement to be paid at least NMW. A ‘worker’, based on the legal definition, is an employee that has a contract to perform work or services for an organisation. These contracts can be written, oral or implied.

As internships are contracted, non-voluntary work, the PRCA believes all interns should receive at least the National Minimum Wage.

This is a legal and a moral obligation.

Leanne Tritton, MD ING Media:
“All businesses have costs – and paying your junior staff a fair wage for their work is one of them.”

Tom Curtin, Chief Executive, Curtin and Co: “We benefit from the dedication and hard work of our interns and it is only right that they share in the reward.”

For more information on the National Minimum Wage please visit www.direct.gov.uk

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills states that interns should be reimbursed for any necessary work-related expenses such as travel costs for attending external meetings and events. Therefore employers should make it clear to interns with written information on what expenses should be claimed, and how to claim them.

THE SOCIAL MOBILITY BUSINESS COMPACT

As part of its campaign, the PRCA has signed up to the Deputy Prime Minister’s Social Mobility Business Compact. Businesses that sign up to the Compact are demonstrating that they are committed to paying interns at least the National Minimum Wage.

The Government’s social mobility ‘tsar’ Alan Milburn told PRCA members in May 2011:

“If bright young people find the gates of opportunity closed to them as they try to enter the workplace, then this is not only an ethical failing but also an economic failure to take advantage of the rich pool of talent we have at our disposal. This is why it is unacceptable that too often internships go to the few who have the right connections, rather than the many who have talent.

“I would urge all businesses to consider their policies on internships and to ensure that everyone, irrespective of background, has a chance to access the opportunities they provide.”

To sign up to the Social Mobility Business Compact, please visit: www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/businesscompact

Lisa Addie, PR intern: “Remuneration for my time and work carried out with the agency allowed me to continue to stay in my term time flat and save a substantial amount of money every month. This helped greatly as after the second period of full time employment I returned to university to complete my fourth and final year. Fourth year was highly demanding and left me with very little spare time. I lived off the money I had saved during my final year which allowed me to focus solely on my studies without also having to look for and carry out part time work.”

Section 2: What do we want? Interns! When do we want them? NOW!

13

The PRCA has 13 universities that it has partnered with to help nurture PR talent

Internships are most useful when there is something tangible that an intern can take away...

Interns can add a great deal of value, providing fresh insights, creativity and enthusiasm – but how do you find one that is right for you?

WHY DO I WANT AN INTERN? SOME THINGS TO ASK YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM IN PREPARATION FOR AN INTERNSHIP

What task or activity am I planning that would be suitable for an intern-level candidate?

There may be ongoing monitoring work that needs completion, research for a big pitch, event support, the launch of a campaign or major research for a project that you are working on.

Is the work suitable for an intern? Can they pick it up relatively quickly and is it something that they can take on and own?

Internships are most useful when there is something tangible that an intern can take away, this may be a new skill or something to add to their portfolio.

Write a short job description so that you can see exactly what you'd like them to do. This might change as the internship progresses, but it will help to clarify your thoughts and also help with your advertising.

How long do I want this internship to last? Do I have enough work for a full-time intern?

We suggest an internship should last for a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of six months to give the intern a chance to learn about your company and culture and get their teeth into a project. It is fine to consider a part time intern if you don't think you have the support/work for someone full-time. If you decide you are looking for a part-time intern, it may be worth considering candidates who are in their last year of university and who may be able to fit in an internship with their studies.

How will you support them?

Think about your organisational structure. Is there someone who is well placed to supervise an intern? Many interns have recently left education and may not have much experience in an office environment and so they might need a little bit more structure and direction than a regular new employee. Assigning a mentor or someone who they are comfortable asking questions of will make a big difference to them enjoying their time with you and their productivity. The perfect mentor would be someone who is in the office most of the time and knows about the work that you want your intern to carry out.

What about resources?

Consider your space and make sure that you have somewhere for the intern to sit and appropriate resources, at the least, some stationery supplies, a desk and a computer if they'll need one.

OK, I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR THEM TO DO, BUT HOW DO I ACTUALLY FIND AN INTERN?

Write a job ad

Go back to the job description that you wrote, pull out the most punchy, relevant parts, add a bit about how wonderful your company is and a bit about company values (if this is important to you) and you've got your job ad! It can be really simple, just make sure you add:

- The job title (Internship) and the name of your company
- How long you expect the internship to last
- That the position is paid and how much
- What will be the most interesting parts of the job

Section 2:

**What do we want? Interns!
When do we want them? NOW!**

Continued...

- What skills you are looking for, e.g. writers/researchers/good telephone skills
- How they should apply; cover letter and CV or application form and where they should direct their applications – a recruitment or group email box is often useful so that you don't get inundated with applications.

Start close to home

Your first port of call should be the recruitment page on your own company website where you can post your job ad. Next, let everyone in the company (or the relevant part of the company) know that you're looking for an intern. Some of the best interns are friends, relatives or friends of friends of your current staff. Don't forget that all applications, even if they are recommendations should be considered together and equally, no favours for friends!

Advertising

Depending on your location, there are a number of places that you can start to look for free.

- Most universities have a graduate or alumni job board that is free (or has a nominal fee) to post internship ads. It is worth putting in a little bit of work to find out who the internship/job placement co-ordinator at your local university is as they may be able to help you with inside knowledge on the best students with references from lecturers etc. You might also like to consider universities that have a course specialising in the skills that you're interested in e.g., English Literature, Scientific courses for researchers, PR, Marketing communications or politics etc.
- The PRCA have 13 universities that they have partnered with to help nurture PR talent. For more details please visit: www.prca.org.uk/PartnerUniversity
- Some websites allow you to post your intern job for free:
 - o PRCA Jobs Board – www.prca.org.uk

- o Gorkana – www.gorkanapr.com
- o Graduate Talent Pool – www.graduatetalentpool.bis.gov.uk
- o Work for MP – www.w4mp.org
- o Student Jobs – studentjobs.co.uk
- o PR moment – www.prmoment.com (phone: 01962 832542)
- Your local paper/website may also have a suitable classified jobs section that you could use.

Be aware that you may get recruitment agencies contacting you in regard to your ad on a website. You shouldn't have to pay agency fees to help you find an intern so don't feel bad about turning them down.

International and National Internship Services

There are many internship companies, many based out of the US who arrange visas and accommodation to interns from various countries for summer internships. If you are approached (or you approach them) it is worth considering:

- Is there a cost? Are there 'membership' costs or any costs (above the intern's wage) if you choose to take on one of their interns?
- What is the pay structure? Some agencies (usually UK based) will ask you to pay them for the internship, and then they arrange payment for the interns. Sometimes the majority of the payment goes directly to the company, which means the intern only gets enough to cover travel. We would advise that you pay your intern directly to ensure they are receiving at least minimum wage.
- Are there cultural advantages/disadvantages of taking on an intern from a different country?
- If there is a chance that you will hire your intern post-placement, you probably won't be able to do this with an international intern and/or there may be further costs from a UK based company in taking an intern on permanently.

SELECTION – THE BEST INTERN FOR YOU

Questions and answers

From your job description you should be able to pull out about 5 questions that you can ask potential interns. Your questions should be clear about the job role, non-discriminatory and give you a sense of the candidates' skills and personality.

If there is a particular skill you're looking for, e.g. writing, monitoring, proof-reading, consider a short test (about 20 minutes or so) so that your candidates can showcase their abilities. In some cases it is good to make this a timed test to make sure that your chosen candidate can write well, even when under the pressure of a deadline.

Interview top tips

- Make sure there are two or more people interviewing each intern (it helps if they're the same people each time)
- Draw up a grid for your interview questions/responses so your panel can make notes.
- Make sure you ask all the candidates the same questions – so that you can pick the best possible candidate for the job.
- Don't forget that the intern is assessing you and your company as well as you assessing them. Scary or overly difficult interview questions can sometimes make the intern not want to come and work for you.
- Have each of your panel write down answers/ratings for each question during the interview and discuss post-interview. This will give you a clear ranking tool and helps you to remember which candidate said what. It also gives you an audit trail should any of the candidates question the process.
- Have a quick meeting after each interview and when you've completed all interviews review all the candidates. Make a decision as soon as you can and feed back to all candidates.

Section 2:

What do we want? Interns! When do we want them? NOW!

Continued...

-
- Make an offer to your preferred candidate before you say no to the others. This way, if your number one candidate says no, you've got other candidates to go back to.
 - Make sure you consider interns who have a background that might be different to others in your organisation. This includes differing educational, cultural, ethnic backgrounds. They might be able to provide a different perspective and creative point of view for your team.

Feedback to candidates

This may have been the first interview that many of your potential interns have had. If they've not been successful, please provide some constructive and specific feedback on where they can improve. This can be a short phone call or an email. Some common and valid feedback examples:

- Not enough research on the company/didn't seem to know what the company does
- Seemed to have difficulty answering questions about X
- Talked too little or too much

Contracts and offers

You've offered the role to your preferred candidate, they've accepted and you've got a firm start date. Your new intern is your employee and is legally entitled to many of the same things as other employees in your business. You must give your intern a contract of employment that states:

- Their job title (Intern)
- Their rate of pay and how they will be paid
- Their place of work
- Start and end date of their assignment
- Notice period (usually one week is fine)
- How much holiday they will be entitled to (statutory holiday is 28 days per year inclusive of public holidays)

Many organisations also ask their interns to sign a confidentiality agreement, particularly if they are going to be aware of commercially sensitive information.

THE END OF AN INTERNSHIP. HOW CAN I HELP?

If, you can hire your intern permanently, GREAT, you've given them a great welcome to the PR world.

What if I can't hire them?

You will have reviewed progress with your intern during their time with you. Have another, more formal meeting toward the end of the internship to gauge:

- Their aspirations – do they want to work in PR?
- Their experience – be open to constructive feedback of your offering and ways that you can improve
- Next steps

What you can do:

- Use your contacts in other companies to help your interns to find another position (either internship or permanent)
- Help them identify the type of company that might help them gain more skills in the areas they want to develop or build skills
- Provide them with a reference
- Assist with the presentation of their portfolio of work
- Interview practice
- Keep in touch! Link in to them
- Offer to meet up with them to see how they are getting on

Section 3: What to do with an Intern

They're Here! What are they going to do?

Placements in busy departments and teams are usually best: they need more resources, and will be best placed to allocate valuable client work to the intern...

The most important thing to get right with any internship is the work that the intern will do: getting this right will make the placement valuable to both the intern and the company. Getting it wrong will result in frustration and disappointment for both sides.

When planning an internship, it is useful to remember that if they do not become a permanent member of your team, they will be going out into the world of communications and acting as a brand ambassador for your organisation. Get it right and they will leave your employ, singing your praises and sharing their good experiences with others. More importantly, one day they might be a budget-holder and become a prospective client. Your interns are the future of your industry, build good relationships with them now and the benefits will be mutual.

PLANNING THE PLACEMENT

Internships don't last long, so it's essential to plan the placement to ensure you get the best possible results. Don't expect the new intern to be the same as the person currently filling the role: not only will they have different abilities and less experience, but they will also have different interests. Every internship needs you to start again with training, briefing and induction. Planning every internship will ensure that you get the best out of each individual, and they will also develop and learn to their full potential.

What do you want?

The best internships deliver real value to the employer. The first thing to decide is what your company wants to get out of the internship.

"An extra pair of hands" isn't a good objective. Being vague about the benefit to the company will lead to a poor placement. If your intern spends their time jumping from one menial task to another they will feel de-valued and de-

motivated and you will be missing out on a fantastic opportunity to boost the skill-set of your workforce.

Beth King, Bournemouth University

PR Student: "I found it very hard to stay motivated when with two of my internships I was given mundane and very administrative jobs where I wasn't benefitting at all and learning absolutely nothing...at one fashion PR internship my main job was to control samples and make cups of tea".

Defining the results you want is essential for all internships. This could include:

- Support to make sure a big project runs flawlessly
- A different perspective for an existing client
- To recruit new staff
- Specific sector knowledge or experience
- Help on specific projects

What will they learn?

When the intern starts, have a conversation with them to determine what they already know, and find out what they would like to learn. You can then develop a series of aspirational, but achievable objectives for the intern to work towards. This will also provide a useful reference point when carrying out progress reviews.

Perhaps the best way to make sure that real results are delivered during the internship is to encourage them to create a portfolio of the work they have done during the placement. As well as focusing the intern's mind on documenting specific achievements, the portfolio can be

Section 3:

What to do with an Intern

They're Here! What are they going to do?

Continued...

invaluable in helping them secure a job if there is not a position for them at your company.

For whom should they work?

Finding the right department and mentor gives the intern the best platform to deliver great results. Placements in busy departments and teams are usually best: they need more resources, and will be best placed to allocate valuable client work to the intern. Offering the chance to experience work in different departments is common in larger agencies, and a great way to give an insight into the many different sides to PR.

A good manager is a crucial element of a successful internship. They must be willing and able to put in the time to support and develop the intern: development and learning should be central to any placement. Whilst finding the time can be a challenge in a busy department, enthusiastic mentors will benefit from the experience, frequently finding the intern's new perspective leads to new ideas and insights.

Make the deliverables clear

An internship is inherently a short-term arrangement. Although interns are obviously keen to get a job at the end of the placement, and most companies use internships as a way of hiring great people, it's important to set clear expectations about the results that should be achieved by the end of the internship.

A self-contained project – with a defined end point and clear objectives – will give a great sense of accomplishment to the intern as well as providing a better opportunity for the employer to observe the skills and abilities of the intern. Most companies have projects that are great ideas, but have been gathering dust for some time. These often make great intern projects.

Many internships involve helping out on several clients and campaigns and, in larger agencies, might involve working in several different departments. This is a great way to provide insight into different career paths within the PR industry, and defining clear objectives will help focus their mind and give a sense of achievement at the end of the placement.

What would really make the difference?

Often, from the intern's point of view, there are a few specific things that would make the difference between an average and outstanding placement. Finding the magic ingredient is the secret to outstanding placements and highly motivated interns. It could be meeting the client during meetings or could be writing copy that gets used in a campaign. Or it could be as simple as observing an account team develop a client strategy from scratch: witnessing the brainstorming, planning meetings, proposal writing and pitch preparation. Remember – they are with you to learn how PR works, so make sure they secure some experience of strategy development, client management, and project implementation.

INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT DURING THE PLACEMENT

Interns are not like other members of your team: their relative inexperience and the limited duration of the placement means they need strong, proactive help and support.

Interns are not like your other employees. It is important to remember that whilst your interns possess a lot of excellent and relevant skills, they have no experience of your company's culture, may have little knowledge of how PR works "in the real world" and might not know much about your clients and their industries. It is inevitable that even outstanding people will have gaps in their knowledge that you might consider obvious.

It is therefore important that you sit them down at the very beginning of their placement and talk them through your company, structure, clients and ethos. This introductory meeting should be done by the person who is going to line manage or mentor the intern. This will enable the intern to establish contact with at least one friendly face on their first day.

The key things you will need to cover include:

- Company ethos
- Team Structure
- Clients (include some case studies)
- House style (attention to detail/ quality control)
- Placement structure
- Professional development targets/ objectives
- Office administration (time sheets, computers, health and safety, stationery etc)
- Office hours
- Dress
- Even down to the little things like where to get lunch!

Make them part of the team

Inclusion is a key factor in the success of an internship. Make sure the intern is included in the team: although they may not always be able to make a contribution, they should sit in on as many discussions, brainstorming and meetings as possible.

Employers need to make the effort to include interns, and so do the interns themselves: if you are new to the world of work, it's easy to think that the secret to success is to get your head down and get on with your work. This approach can lead to isolation, and impairs learning. Make sure you explain the importance of asking questions and joining discussions – and that it's OK to chat about your weekend during working hours!

Section 3:

What to do with an Intern

They're Here! What are they going to do?

Continued...

Christopher Hicks, Bournemouth University PR Student: "The level of responsibility that I felt that I had during my year as an intern at BBC Worldwide meant that I didn't feel like a student on a placement, I felt like a full time member of staff and was treated as one by the organisation, having access to training and benefits as any other staff member would have. In terms of day to day tasks, yes there was admin but it never got in the way of more meaningful tasks which were essential to both the team and my development as a student."

Make sure the mentor you choose is enthusiastic: a mentor that doesn't want the role will do little to help the intern and may even demotivate them.

BUT WHAT WILL THEY ACTUALLY DO?

Sometimes there is a "someday" project on the agency's to do list that will form the basis of an excellent internship. But what if there isn't a good project: what tasks should an intern be able to do?

A little bit of pain never hurt me!

It's OK to give interns some of the unpleasant or unexciting jobs to do: they should see all sides of agency life. You must, however, take care to ensure that they don't get seen as the place to dump all the "crap": apart from being unfair and ineffective, if they move on in the industry you really want the intern to be saying good things about your agency.

I'd love to do this...

The right jobs will motivate the intern as well as delivering value to the agency. Some ideas include:

- Getting involved in client meetings
- Being part of brainstorming
- Helping out at client events
- Being encouraged to attend external networking events, think tank meetings and seminars

-
- Writing the first draft of press materials
 - Developing research briefs on prospective clients
 - Sitting in on pitch rehearsals
 - Contributing to business development and being part of the drive for new business
 - Being asked for their opinions.

No way! I'd hate that

Picking the wrong things to do is the best way to make an internship fail. Not only is this demotivating for the intern, but it can also impact negatively on your agency:

- Pitching to editors/ journalists with inadequate preparation
 - Speaking with the client directly
 - Cold calling prospective clients
 - Busy work that adds little value
-

REVIEW PROGRESS

To get the best out of a placement you need to communicate frequently.

Open and honest feedback is important

Be honest with each other. When you sit down to discuss the progress of the placement be open about what the intern is doing right, and where they are going wrong. It's particularly important to address issues at the start of the placement: fixing a simple misunderstanding early on can transform an average placement into a fabulous experience for both sides. Make sure you refer back to the early development objectives that were set on the intern's first day – these will help measure the intern's progress.

Schedule time to talk

In the high-pressure world of PR, it's easy to let client demands take precedence over supporting an intern. This can lead to the placement drifting and the intern failing to complete their work before the end of the placement. Setting regular times to sit down and discuss the placement means that misunderstandings and problems are addressed promptly, giving the internship the best possible chance of success.

Section 4: Attention Interns!

Advice for interns: how to apply, what to do in an interview, and what to do during your internship

Do not be foolish with your Twitter account as employers can see it – especially if you mention Twitter on your CV...

I want to be a PR professional, but how do I get an internship?

If you are reading these Guidelines then it is likely that you have already decided, or are seriously considering entering the PR industry. Congratulations on making a great choice!

It can seem daunting when applying for internships for the first time, but making yourself stand out from the crowd is simple and very effective if you follow the same basic rules that all future employers are looking out for:

STEP ONE – WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE STILL AT UNIVERSITY

The first, and most important thing you should do, is to work hard and get as good grades as possible at college and at university. Good grades are not going to make or break your career, but are a significant advantage for your first step onto the career ladder. Nobody gets good grades without trying hard, so do not underestimate the message this sends to the employers you are trying to impress.

Work out what you want to do. Public Relations is great because it is so diverse, so you need to discover the different sectors to understand what you would find most suitable. Consumer PR remains the most popular, but you may prefer to work in corporate or B2B PR, fashion PR, technology PR, or maybe you are more politically inclined and would prefer to work in public affairs.

What is B2B PR? What is public affairs? Do you know what the difference between a consultancy and an in-house communications team is? You need to understand and research the industry. The best place to start looking is through the trade magazines such as PRWeek, or for public affairs, Public Affairs News.

Joining a trade body such as the PRCA will be helpful as you will gain access to

case studies, videos and best practice pieces, can add designatory letters after your name, and will be able to see the latest work placements and internships in our student hub.

Be proactive

Visit your university careers office and see what is available and contact local PR agencies yourself to see what is around and what kind of PR they do. Even if it means shadowing for a couple of days you can now demonstrate you are acting on your interest to work in the industry. Some PR agencies will only take you for work experience if it is a part of your course, so you may need to get a letter from your tutor/lecturer to confirm your studies.

As PR is such a wide field, you're only limited by your interests. Join university societies, be creative, do extra-curricular activities. Writing for the student newspaper or an e-magazine is great as published material illustrates strong writing skills. You can get involved in organising events to demonstrate your team-work, negotiation and client service skills. To work in PR you'll need to be able to demonstrate creative flair (even if it is just joining in brainstorming and thinking of ideas) so having lots of experiences and being exposed to lots of different people, brands and products can only help. All of these will give you something interesting to talk about at your interviews.

Section 4:

Attention Interns!

Advice for interns: how to apply, what to do in an interview, and what to do during your internship

Continued...

What if I do not intend to go to university?

Then you may want to hear more about our Apprenticeship Scheme, which is aimed at school leavers that do not wish to go to university but want to work in the PR and communications industry. More information is available at www.prapprenticeships.com

STEP TWO – APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS

The key to applying for internships is being very persistent.

First you need to work hard on your CV. Your careers office should be able to help you, and don't be afraid to share with your peers, parents, and tutors to check that it is accurate. If there is one thing PR professionals hate it is spelling and grammar mistakes. Your CV must be immaculate!

Heather Baker, MD of TopLine Communications: "You need to make sure your CV is flawless. That means it should be easy to read, provide a clear overview of your strengths and successes to date, and it should be grammatically sound. Resist the temptation to use multiple fonts, or to go overboard in your use of bold, italics and underlining – from a reader's perspective, the simpler the better."

Always research on the PR agency you are applying to and then familiarise yourself with the work they do rather than making a generic application. A line about what PR campaign they did that impressed you the most and why would make your CV stand out. Consider including the text of your cover letter in the body of the email you send, so that the recruiter doesn't have to open two separate documents.

Heather Baker, MD of TopLine Communications: "As an employer, if I receive an email in which it is clear that the candidate has done their research then I will always read on."

While there is a lot of competition, sometimes getting a placement is about luck. Call your local PR agencies and ask them if they would be interested in taking an intern. Search all the relevant databases and see if you can get a contact to e-mail your application. Follow up with a polite phone call to check whether your CV has been received. Network as much as you can. Ask friends, colleagues, etc. if they know of any PR agencies looking for interns. Remember that your social media profiles now act as an extension of your CV (if you are not yet on Twitter and LinkedIn, why not?). Make sure that what it says on your CV is aligned with what is said on your LinkedIn. Do not be foolish with your Twitter account as employers can see it – especially if you mention Twitter on your CV. If you write a blog (and it is 'safe for work') include it on your CV as well, it can give a really good idea of your writing skills and what kind of things you are interested in.

STEP 3 – THE INTERVIEW

There are three stages to the interview – before, during and after:

Before

- Work hard on your presentation before the interview. Dress well and slightly on the conservative side. Avoid cardinal sins such as not having your top button done up for boys, chipped nail varnish for girls, and messy hair for all.
- Re-read your own CV – you need to know it off by heart to ensure you can appropriately answer any question about it.

- Re-research your organisation. Read its press releases. If it is a consultancy, who are its clients? If it is in-house what is its purpose? Who is interviewing you and what is their role? What does it say in the job description, and can you discuss each bullet point?
- Punctuality is absolutely crucial. Plan your journey well in advance. Have the office's phone number on you in case of emergencies.

During

- Get off on the right foot with a firm handshake and make eye contact.
- Eye contact when speaking throughout the interview is important to show you are engaging.
- It isn't strictly necessary to do so, but some find it helpful to take their CV, covering letter and other relevant pieces of work with them.
- You can take a bit of time to answer questions, if you're nervous take a breath or take a sip of water to give you time to think before you begin your answer.
- Be prepared to answer questions like "Where do you see yourself in five years time?" and "What is your favourite animal and why?"
- Do not waffle, mumble, talk too quickly and do not try to be too funny.
- Answer questions concisely and refer to all the research and experience you have done in preparation.
- Do not swear!
- Have at least three (relevant!) questions prepared for the end of the interview.

After

- Don't be afraid to follow up after your interview. Send an email to the person who interviewed you to thank them and say you look forward to hearing their reply.
- Do not overdo it. Do not send any gifts or presents and you absolutely must not pester. Find out when you are likely to hear from them and then be patient.
- Do not be too disappointed if you are not successful first time. There are a lot

Section 4:

Attention Interns!

Advice for interns: how to apply, what to do in an interview, and what to do during your internship

Continued...

of opportunities out there so use your previous interview as a valuable learning exercise for the next one.

- If you miss out on the role, ask for feedback on your performance. Find out what it was that the successful candidate did so that you can practice for next time.

WHAT TO DO DURING YOUR INTERNSHIP

Congratulations! You've got an internship. It's not easy to get a placement in the exciting, creative and glamorous world of PR. Now for the bad news: the world of PR isn't always exciting and glamorous. In fact you'll find that hard grind is often the order of the day, rather than dazzling creativity.

Don't get me wrong: you do get times of excitement, creativity and even glamour. The job is often great fun, and it can be very rewarding. But you'll also find that sometimes producing brilliant ideas is the easy part of the job, and that making them happen is far harder. You'll also find that – just like any other job – you need to do a fair amount of administrative work, particularly when it comes to measurement of results.

How to make the people you work with love you forever

So you've got to expect to work hard during your internship: you won't be leading a team brainstorming new ideas for Coke or Disney. In fact you might find yourself making coffee, analysing coverage or doing the filing. You might even be asked to do things that are frankly... boring. When you are asked to do something like this, there is only one way to respond: smile, say you'd be very happy to do the work and then do your best to do a great job.

If you've got this far, you probably feel pretty depressed. Don't! The first thing you need to know is that your boss hates

giving you this sort of work even more than you might dislike doing it. They have probably been doing it themselves for months or years. But they know that it has to be done, and it's a project that you'll be able to complete successfully on your own. Trust me, they'll remember your attitude and will not only be happy to tell everyone how great you were, but will be more than happy to return a favour: you've already started building a network.

There is a lot of talk about networking in business. There is no secret to great networking: be nice to people, help them whenever you can and complete every project to a high standard. That's it!

So that all you need to know if you want your internship to be successful? Be nice to people, work hard and keep your head down? Not really: if you want to turn a successful internship into a great time that will set you up for an awesome career, then we've barely started...

Do the basics really well

Don't ruin a placement by failing on the simple things: always arrive on time (or five minutes early), wear the right clothes (slightly too smart is better than too scruffy) and make sure you follow any processes and procedures. The odd mistake will be forgiven, but if you show you fit into the culture perfectly, it will make you much more employable.

Building a relationship with your supervisor

When you start an internship, you'll be allocated a boss. They are the most important person: not only are they most likely to see, and be impressed by your work, but you can learn a lot from them too if you are opportunistic and proactive.

During your first meeting with them, you need to find out the best way of working with them: i.e. how often do they want to meet you, when can you talk and whether there are times when you shouldn't interrupt them. You'll also want to know

about their job – their most important clients, the media in which they need to secure coverage and their big projects. They tend to be fairly busy, so don't try to find this out all at once: if you leave the first meeting with a project to do, an agreed time to meet again and the knowledge that you never interrupt your boss when their door is shut, you've had a great first meeting.

Expanding your network

At any agency you'll find people doing fascinating work. When you meet people, just ask them what they're working on: showing interest is the best way to build a professional relationship. Make sure you also connect with them on relevant social networks such as LinkedIn.

You're responsible for learning

Work is different from education. Schools and universities are held accountable for educating students and helping them achieve qualifications. Businesses are responsible for making money. Of course any good business, particularly in a sector such as PR, understands the benefits of improving the skills of their teams and is willing to invest time and money to do this. But ultimately it's down to you. The formula is simple: the more proactive you are, the more you will benefit.

The good news is that learning in a PR environment can be fun! You need to find out about the agency's clients: what do they do, what are they saying in their PR, what are their major challenges. The more you can learn about the clients, the more you'll get out of the internship. Spend time looking at the media that matter to the agency and its clients. The more you read, the more you increase your learning and this can help your supervisor to create proactive work for you (at the very least you should read the newspapers every day). And learn about the agency – for example, read any recent reports or 'white papers' that the agency has produced.

Section 4:

Attention Interns!

Advice for interns: how to apply, what to do in an interview, and what to do during your internship

Continued...

Whilst you're responsible for learning, you will find almost everyone is happy to help. Don't be afraid to ask for help – although do make sure that the person has the time to help you first!

THE SECRET – HOW TO BE INVOLVED IN FABULOUS, EXCITING PROJECTS AND GET A GREAT JOB AFTER THE INTERNSHIP

Exhausted? It is really hard to make a great impression during an internship: let's face it, the agency you're working for probably wouldn't be prepared to take on projects that are as brief as the typical internship. So how are you going to make a great impression? You're going to ask for more work!

Don't just say "I've done all my work, what else can I do?" Surprisingly it's the worst thing you can say: chances are your boss has given you all the work that is easy to delegate, so this innocent offer to help can mean they have more work to do. And they have three clients making unreasonable demands (if it's a good day!). The secret is to know what you want to do, and to know that your boss won't have to spend any time getting you started.

Having an intern ask "I'm up to date on all my work, could I sit in on the internal brainstorming meeting for client X?" or "The project is on hold this afternoon and Kathy said she'd show me what she's doing on her campaign – is that OK?" are enough to make your boss's day. You've told them you are ahead in your work, you've found something to do that will make the placement interesting, and they just have to say yes - and take the credit for running the best internships in the agency.

There is just one rule to remember: never ask to sit in on client meetings, unless you've already met with that client. Sorry, that will come when you get the job.

AFTER YOUR INTERNSHIP, THERE ARE STILL THINGS THAT YOU SHOULD DO

"Thanks so much for the opportunity. I've learnt so much and would love to have the opportunity to work at an agency like this one." We all know that there will be ups and downs during an internship, but saying this as you leave is the best way of securing a job at the agency. If they offer you a job, congratulations!

It's quite likely, however, that you won't get a job offer at the end of your internship. Don't take this personally: if you've worked hard during the placement, your boss almost certainly wants to employ you. If you keep in contact, then they probably will employ you at the first opportunity, so stay in contact with everyone you met, thank them for support, and ask them for help and advice if you need it.

If you didn't get a job at the end of the internship, you need to find work. Don't panic! You're building a career that will last many years. What did you like doing at the agency? What did you hate? Is there a job or agency that could be the perfect fit for you? When you've decided, don't be afraid to ask for a reference or even an introduction. The PR world isn't that big, and it's possible that someone you impressed during your internship has contacts at the agency you now know is the perfect place for you to work.

Once you've got a placement in a new company, be positive about the agency that gave you the internship. It's likely that you'll end up working with at least one of the people again.

Lizzy Ellery, DWP Public Relations:

"I really would recommend doing one to anyone who has the chance. I know I have been extremely lucky, considering I didn't go into the industry with a relevant degree – but, I think it is one of the best things that you can do, if you don't get a job out of it immediately, at least you have something to put on your CV.

I don't think I have anything bad to say about my experiences at all. I was never promised a job out of either of my internships, and it was never even suggested, but I still feel that I dedicated myself to them as much as I would have a paid job, and I think my focus and hard work paid off in the end! I've been rewarded with a career that challenges me and that I enjoy, and I have the opportunity for development and progression."

Section 5: Diverse Internships in PR

by **Faye Wenman**
The Taylor Bennett Foundation Programme

70%

Over 70% of TBF graduates go on to secure paid internships/employment

Internships are most useful when there is something tangible that an intern can take away...

The Taylor Bennett Foundation (TBF) training programme has been running since 2008, with the aim to address the lack of diversity in the communications profession.

In particular, the TBF aims to equip talented individuals from ethnic minorities with the skills, experience and confidence to launch their careers in communications and to secure entry level roles in communications.

To achieve this, TBF has devised a bespoke ten week training programme, which is delivered in partnership with a sponsoring communications consultancy, as committed as TBF is to improving diversity in the profession.

Over the ten weeks, the selected trainees are paid – to ensure there is fair access to this programme – to learn about the communications profession. The training focusses on four areas:

- 1: General skills training – for example, how to write a blog or a press release.
- 2: Employment training – for example, CV workshops and mock interviews.
- 3: PR Skills – the sponsoring agency sets the interns a weekly task in the style of The Apprentice, a crisis scenario for example, for which the trainees receive immediate feedback. Similarly, the PRCA offers the interns bespoke courses pro bono.
- 4: Industry exposure – for example, weekly visits to communications consultancies, in-house communications teams or media outlets to get a wide view on the profession.

Throughout the programme, each trainee is paired up with a Taylor Bennett buddy and a buddy from the sponsoring agency, who will provide the intern with support across the ten weeks. In addition, each graduate from the programme is paired up with a mentor; an experienced communications professional who volunteers their time and commits to a minimum of two years' involvement with the graduate of the programme.

The TBF programme is expanding as more partners come forward looking to sponsor the programmes, host visits, or their employees offer to be guest speakers or mentors. Over 70% of TBF graduates go on to secure paid internships/employment, which in the context of youth unemployment having tipped over the 1m mark is something we are very proud of. A more diverse profession will be possible if this partnership continues and grows, permitting the TBF programme to expand across the country and giving more Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) graduates access to the programme.

Section 5:

Diverse Internships in PR

by **Faye Wenman**

The Taylor Bennett Foundation Programme

Continued...

Cindy Yau, Former Taylor Bennett Foundation Trainee: “After I spent a year working in Nepal within PR, I found myself applying for over 100 jobs in just a few months – and was shocked by the lack of response from any of them.

That’s when I came across the Taylor Bennett Foundation by accident. A friend had retweeted information from the Course Director, Sarah Stimson’s Twitter.

The Foundation was set up specifically for people like me, newly graduated, without contacts but ambitious and eager to learn and succeed in PR and Communications. I worked on my application for the next ten weeks, the assessment was gruelling and tough, but I was one of the eight interns selected for the winter Talk PR fashion internship!

I can’t even begin to describe what the programme has done for me. It gave me confidence (after weekly presentations on real briefs, the concept isn’t so daunting) and I met some awe-inspiring people through it. We visited places such as Channel 4, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Freud and Hume Brophy. I was exposed to different cultures, different environments and, best of all, I made friends through the programme.

And of course, if it hadn’t been for TBF, I wouldn’t be where I am now – TBF enabled and empowered me to apply for my next paid internship within the communications function of a FTSE 100 company, InterContinental Hotels Group. It has been a great experience and I have recently been offered a permanent role in their communications team.”

PRCA Intern Guidelines

Compiled by the PRCA and its members
for the public relations and communications
industry and for aspiring PR interns

Further Information

PRCA

Founded in 1969, the PRCA is the professional body that represents UK PR consultancies, in-house communications teams, PR freelancers and individuals. The PRCA promotes all aspects of public relations and internal communications work, helping teams and individuals maximise the value they deliver to clients and organisations.

www.prca.org.uk

PRCA Intern Campaign

In October 2011 the PRCA launched a campaign with PRWeek to end the practice of unpaid internships as part of the association's commitment to raising standards in all areas of the PR industry. By October 2012, over 75 consultancy members have signed up to the campaign to end unpaid internships.

www.prca.org.uk/intern_campaign

PRCA Internship Training

The PRCA is committed to helping organisations develop the next generation of PR professionals through paid intern programmes with structured training. The PRCA intern scheme is designed to help interns maximise their on the job experience accompanied with professional standard PRCA training.

www.prca.org.uk/Internship

PRCA Apprenticeship Scheme

The PRCA is leading a partnership to develop and deliver an Apprenticeship programme for the public relations industry providing non graduates with a clear, structured and industry recognised career path into the industry.

www.prapprenticeships.com

Intern Aware

Intern Aware is the campaign for fair, paid internships. The UK is at risk of creating a society that throws on the scrap heap those who are unable to intern for free for long periods of time. Intern Aware campaigns for interns to be paid at least the national minimum wage, so all are able to afford to get the work experience they deserve.

www.internaware.org

Taylor Bennett Foundation

Since 2008, Taylor Bennett has been seeking directly to address the need for greater diversity in the communications & PR industry. We have done this through the delivery of a ten week communications training and personal development programme for black and minority ethnic graduates, specifically designed to strengthen their skills and provide them with industry relevant work experience. The Taylor Bennett Foundation was established to ensure the expansion and continuity of the programme, and to enable its work to have a wider profile.

www.taylorbennettfoundation.org

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