

**General Guidelines**

**For**

**JobBridge**

**The National Internship Scheme (NIS)**

## INTRODUCTION

The Government announced a new National Internship Scheme as part of its Jobs Initiative programme, which was published on 10 May 2011.

The National Internship Scheme, to be known as JobBridge, will provide at any one time up to 6,000 work experience placements of 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals in organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors. It will be a time-limited scheme for a maximum of 2 years. Applications for internships will be accepted from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

Participants on the National Internship Scheme will receive, through the Department of Social Protection, a single allowance (Internship Allowance) consisting of €50 per week on top of their equivalent existing social welfare entitlements. No employer top up contributions will be allowed.

The objective of the scheme is to:

- Keep unemployed people close to the labour market.
- Provide unemployed people with the opportunity to gain quality work experience thereby increasing their employability.
- Facilitate employers to contribute to the national activation agenda by providing internships opportunities to the unemployed.

JobBridge the National Internship Scheme is part of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) and is being used by the Department of Social Protection as a means of activating unemployed people.

### Definitions and Terms:

**Internship Scheme** – The National Internship Scheme runs from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013. All recruitment of participants must take place during this period. The National Internship Scheme is part of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) and is being used by the Department of Social Protection as a means of activating unemployed people,

**Host Organisation** – Organisations providing internship opportunities and participating in the scheme are referred to as ‘Host Organisations’.

The Host Organisation must be a legal entity and/or a charity recognised by the Revenue Commissioners (with a CHY number).

**Internship** – a 6 (26 week) or 9 (39 week) month work experience opportunity delivered under the National Internship Scheme.

If an intern has to complete an Internship before the intended finish date, for genuine reasons, the Intern may be entitled to a total period of 9 months during the lifetime of the Internship Scheme.

**Intern** – An intern is a person who is availing of an internship under the National Internship Scheme. They are not an employee of their respective Host Organisation as stated in Section 16 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011.

*A person who is engaged by another person to carry out work or perform any duty or service pursuant to a placement under the National Internship Scheme shall, for the purposes of any enactment or rule of law (other than the Tax Acts and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005), be deemed not to be an employee of the other person or to carry out such work or perform such duties pursuant to a contract of service.*

**Internship Allowance** refers to the payment an intern will receive while participating in the scheme. The intern will receive an allowance equivalent to their current Social Welfare (SW) allowance plus an additional €50 per week for the duration of the internship.

**Internship week**- will range from 30 – 40 hours per week. To be agreed between Host Organisation and Intern.

Placement refers to the actual 6 or 9 month work placement the interns will undertake in the Host Organisation.

## **ELEMENTS OF A GOOD INTERNSHIP**

Internships can be useful for all unemployed individuals who are interested in developing or maintaining work skills in order to try out a new career or to ensure their skills remain up-to-date and relevant.

Internships provide real world experience to those looking to explore or gain the relevant knowledge and skills required to enter into a particular career field. Usually short term in nature with the primary focus on getting some on-the-job training internships take what is learned in the classroom or in previous workplace settings and allow application in a workplace setting.

An Internship will provide individuals with an opportunity to put into practice skills they have learned during training and/or education, in a workplace setting, to enhance those skills, understand the workplace environment and context and to benefit from a mentor or supervisor's experience and advice.

Maximum benefit will be gained when a supervisor or mentor is on hand to guide and manage the workplace experience and, ideally, to agree a set of learning outcomes that will be achieved at the end of the placement.

The work environment should provide practical tasks to enable the individual to apply the particular skills that they wish to learn or enhance and also the opportunity to obtain wider product or service knowledge and establish networks for future employment.

An internship will allow the individual to achieve some of the following objectives:

- The opportunity to test interest in a particular career
- The work environment to learn how to apply theory to practical work situations
- To develop new skills / enhance existing skills that are directly applicable to careers
- To enhance career prospects in chosen work area
- The opportunity to develop personal attributes that contribute to effective interpersonal work relationships
- To learn good general work habits such as time management and communication skills
- To provide the intern with a recognised statement from the Host Organisation regarding the skills learned or practiced, work attitude and aptitude together with relevant references

#### **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- Individuals may avail of a maximum of 2 JobBridge internships however, the total cumulative time cannot exceed 9 months (39 weeks) over the two year period.
- Internships can commence from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013.
- In order to be eligible to participate in JobBridge – the National Internship Scheme an individual must be:
  - Currently in receipt of a live claim (Jobseekers Allowance/Jobseekers Benefit/Signing for Credits) on the Live Register
  - And have been in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit, Jobseekers Allowance or signing for Social Insurance Contribution Credits for a total of 3 months (78 days) or more in the last 6 months.
- Individuals in receipt of One Parent Family Payment or Widows Pension are ineligible to participate in JobBridge even if they are also receiving half rate Jobseekers Benefit.

- Casual claimants on the Live Register may participate in JobBridge provided that their employer is not the provider of the internship.
- Eligibility for individuals who have been selected by host organisation must be confirmed by the Department of Social Protection before the internship can commence.
- Periods spent on Back to Education Allowance, VTOS, FÁS/Fáilte Ireland Training course, Youthreach, FIT, Community Employment Schemes, TUS, the Rural Social Scheme, Back to Work Scheme, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, FÁS Job Initiative or Job Assist will count towards meeting the eligibility of JobBridge, provided:
  - The individual has completed these programmes
  - Has signed back on to the Live Register
  - Is in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit/Allowance or Jobseeker credits immediately before commencing on JobBridge.

**Commencement on the internship is dependant on DSP confirming the individual's eligibility.**

#### **HOST ORGANISATION ELIGIBILITY**

Host organisations are organisations providing internship opportunities and participating in the scheme.

1. This scheme is open to host organisations in the private, public (including commercial semi-state) or community and voluntary sectors.
2. In order to qualify for an internship an organisation must have a minimum of 1 full time employee who is employed for 30 hours or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI)
3. The host organisation must be a legal entity and/or a charity recognised by the Revenue Commissioners (with a CHY number).
4. The host organisation currently may not have vacancies in the area of activity in which the internship is offered.
5. The internship will not be provided to displace an employee. The Scheme Administrator reserves the right to review cases where it is reported that this is the case.

6. The host organisation may not provide an internship opportunity under the Scheme to an individual they have an existing employment relationship with.
7. The host organisation's Public/Employers Liability insurance and Motor insurance, if applicable, will cover any interns on this scheme.
8. The host organisation must be fully compliant with current workplace health and safety and all other legal requirements.
9. The Host Organisation has responsibility to ensure that the appropriate process is applied to placements that require Garda vetting. Interns must agree to comply with requests for Garda Vetting where necessary in accordance with the Host Organisation's policy on Garda Vetting.
10. The number of Internships below shows the total number of internship places an organisation can offer at any one time

Number of Full Time Employees*	Number of Internships
1-10 employees	1 internship place
11-20 employees	2 internship places
21-30 employees	3 internship places
30 + employees	20% of the workforce to a maximum of 200 internships whichever is the smaller

\* Who is employed for 30 hours or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI)

11. Local branch offices of national organisations e.g. large retail outlets, will **not** be regarded as an individual host organisation for the purpose of JobBridge (effective from 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011).

The maximum number of interns a Host Organisation can have, on the Scheme, at any point in time is 200 irrespective of the number of local branches they have.

12. A cooling off period of 6 months must elapse before another placement in the same area of activity is approved. This applies whether the previous placement or the new placement is a WPP placement or an internship placement.

13. Where an internship ends before the intended finish date and the host organisation wishes to advertise the same internship these applications will be reviewed on case by case basis.

However, if the organisation employs the intern following the scheme in this area, the cooling off period does not apply. This is applied on a like-for-like basis.

14. If the placement is in another area of activity no cooling off period is required.
15. A Host Organisation may have an allocation of Interns as well as an allocation of WPP participants at the same time. However, the combined number of Interns and WPP participants cannot exceed the total number of employees. (see table below)

Number of Full Time Employees *	Total Number of Internships & WPP Placements
<b>1-10 employees</b>	1 internship place plus 1 WPP place <u>Note: The combined number of Interns plus WPP participants cannot exceed the total number of employees</u>
<b>11-20 employees</b>	2 internship places plus 2 WPP Places
<b>21-30 employees</b>	3 internship places plus 3 WPP places
<b>30 + employees</b>	20% of the workforce to a maximum of 200 intern and 10% of your workforce to a maximum of 25 WPP places whichever is the smaller, e.g. a total allocation of 225.
* who is employed for 30 hrs or more per week (i.e. on payroll and subject to tax and PRSI)	

#### TYPES OF PLACEMENTS

- Currently placements in the trade/craft area (e.g. electrical, plumbing) are not allowed for JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme.
- Host Organisations cannot specify a requirement for craft qualification except in the following circumstance: teachers.

## **INTERNS PAYMENTS/ENTITLEMENTS**

- The intern will receive an allowance equivalent to their current Social Welfare allowance plus an additional €50 per week for the duration of the internship (Internship Allowance).
  - The Internship Allowance will be paid in arrears.
  - No employer top up contributions will be allowed.

It is expected that participants will receive this top-up allowance approximately 2 weeks after commencing on the programme. All payments of the Internship Allowance will be made by the Department of Social Protection via Electronic Fund Transfer into the Intern's bank account.

- Out of pocket expenses - There is nothing to prevent a Host Organisation reimbursing an intern for expenses incurred as part of the internship. However, expenses should not be provided for normal activities such as travel to and from the main location of the internship.

Payments other than out of pocket expenses by a Host Organisation are likely to have potential Benefit in Kind impacts and may also affect an individual's social welfare status. Should this issue arise participants and/or Host Organisations should seek advice from their local Department of Social Protection office and/or the Revenue Commissioners on this matter.

The Department of Social Protection are not liable for any expenses arising from an internship – either in respect of the intern or the Host Organisation (other than the payment of the Internship Allowance).

- For interns, the period in receipt of the internship allowance will be disregarded in respect of social welfare payment and, upon completion of the scheme, the SW claim will be resumed from the point at which they left. For example, an individual on jobseeker's benefit with 60 days of entitlement left on his/her claim will still have 60 days of entitlement left when their internship is completed if they resume their claim.
- The following applies for individuals under 25 years of age:

Individuals will be entitled to their base rate of social welfare plus the weekly top-up of €50.

Individuals whose WPP placement has been converted into an internship under the National Internship Scheme and who are currently in receipt of Jobseekers rate will switch to their age related Jobseekers rate but will be paid an additional top-up of €50 per week.

- An intern will be required to participate on the scheme for a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 40 hours per week.
- Failure to do so may result in a reduction of the internship allowance.
- Annual Leave - Interns are entitled to all the Public holidays and 1.75 annual leave days per month of internship.

## THE PROCESS

**Please note that all correspondence with Host Organisations will be by way of email/online returns therefore it is vitally important that organisations provide current email address. All forms and documents will be available on the JobBridge website and Host Organisations will be provided with a username and password in order to undertake the steps in the process. Where queries arise organisations may be contacted by the National Contact Centre (NCC).**

1. A host organisation will complete an online application form on the [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie) website. This will allow the host organisation to register with Jobs Ireland if not already registered and to advertise their internship placement.
2. It is incumbent on each Host Organisation to develop an internship specification. The internship specification should contain the following data;
  - Company overview
  - Department information
  - The responsibilities
  - The requirements
3. Once the internship is validated and the Host Organisation's eligibility checked, the placement will be advertised on the JobBridge website ([www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie)), Jobs Ireland website, WATIS machines and in local Employment Services offices and the organisation will be notified and can then also advertise the internship.
4. Interested applicants will apply directly to the organisation.
5. The host organisation will meet and "select" candidate(s).

In order to participate on the scheme the host organisation and intern(s) must sign a standard internship agreement before commencing on the scheme (downloaded when the HO registers the potential intern).

The Host Organisation must assign a mentor to the intern for the duration of the internship, to provide the following:

- ongoing support
- to be a point of contact for the intern throughout the internship
- provide an induction
- ensure the opportunity to learn/apply skills in the workplace described in the Standard Agreement are available to the intern (downloaded when the HO registers the potential intern).
- they may also provide formal mentoring (see Toolkit on [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie))

6. The host organisation must logon to their account and add the details of the the candidate that has been selected, (pending the Department of Social Protection eligibility check) complete and sign the Standard Agreement (copy to be made available to Employment Services at any time during the internship, if requested) and print the Eligibility form.

The Jobseeker must take the Eligibility Form (which can be downloaded from the JobBridge website) to their local Social Welfare office for completion. Once eligibility is confirmed, the Social Welfare Office returns (for eligible clients only) all completed forms to JobBridge for processing.

Clients who are ineligible will have the form returned to them by the Social Welfare Office and the client must notify the Host Organisation that they are ineligible to participate on JobBridge.

Commencement on the internship is dependant on the Department of Social Protection confirming the individual's eligibility

7. Employment Services updates the client's record on their system and the Host Organisation will be notified by email that the internship can commence. (No intern can commence without this notification)
8. Once an individual has commenced the internship, the Host Organisation must logon immediately to their JobBridge account and input the actual start date for the intern so that the internship allowance can be paid by the Department of Social Protection.
9. The Host Organisation must assign a mentor to the intern for the duration of the internship, to provide the following:
  - ongoing support
  - to be a point of contact for the intern throughout the internship
  - provide an induction
  - ensure the opportunity to learn/apply skills in the workplace described in the Standard Agreement are available to the intern (downloaded when the HO registers the potential intern).
  - they may also provide formal mentoring (see Toolkit on [www.jobbridge.ie](http://www.jobbridge.ie))

The Intern should be allowed time to attend interviews, visit their Local Social Welfare Office, and Employment Services , etc in order to facilitate their job seeking activities

Organisations may contact the National Contact Centre for assistance or specific query about their application on free-phone number 1800-303-515 or 046-9738080.

## COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Monthly:
  - a. the Host Organisation must logon and complete a compliance check to verify that:
    - i. The attendance of the intern continues in accordance with the Standard Agreement;
    - ii. The internship is being delivered as described by the host organisation, in accordance with the Standard Agreement
    - iii. Actual Finish date (if different from the due finish date)

Failure to return the monthly form or to comply with the terms of the Standard Agreement may affect the intern's payment or result in a monitoring visit.

2. Finishing an Internship:
  - a. The Host Organisation is required to log on and complete the following:
    - i. The compliance check to confirm the actual finish date
    - ii. A Completion/Reference for the intern that will detail the professional development/learning outcomes the intern has acquired over the course of the placement.
    - iii. An Evaluation Form

Failure to comply with the above will mean that the Host Organisation will not be entitled to offer further placements under the scheme.

- b. The Intern must complete an Evaluation Form
- c. The Intern must notify the Department of Social Protection that the Internship has finished

If the placement finishes sooner than the agreed finish date, the following applies:

- One week's notice must be given by either party
- The Host organisation must immediately logon to their JobBridge account and enter the early completion (finish date).
- The intern must notify the Department of Social Protection immediately.