



# **INTERNSHIPS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

## IFSA Guidelines

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## Introduction

IFSA is committed to fostering meaningful, ethical, and inclusive internship and/or personal development opportunities such as fellowships and volunteers. As a global student network, we engage with a wide range of partner organizations, ranging from small organisations to large institutions. We recognize these contexts differ, but we believe all internships should reflect mutual respect, learning, and professional integrity.

Our aim is not to prohibit specific internship formats but to advocate for experiences that are fair, educational, and transparent. Whether internships are in-person or remote or hybrid, full-time or part-time, we encourage IFSA members to reflect critically on the opportunities they accept and the standards we promote as a network.

## Core Principles

### Fair Compensation

IFSA does not support unpaid internships as a default. Internships should offer fair financial compensation or equivalent benefits, such as housing, meals, daily subsistence allowance (per diem) or travel support, recognizing the intern's time, skills, and effort.

We acknowledge that the definition of "fair" may vary depending on the size and type of organization. A small organisation offering skills-sharing in a non-profit context differs significantly from a large institution benefiting from substantial unpaid labor. Transparency is key. IFSA encourages open discussion with host organizations about compensation and the possibility of improving conditions where necessary.

### Mutual value

Internships should be structured to offer meaningful learning experiences for students, which is aligned with IFSA Strategy, while also bringing value to the host organization. Tasks and assignments should be educational, skills-based, and relevant to the intern's academic or professional development.

### Ethical and Professional Standards

IFSA encourages internships that follow ethical labor practices and reflect inclusive, equitable principles. Internships should be structured responsibly, uphold professionalism, and foster a diverse learning space.

## Support and Transparency

Internships should begin with a clear role description and defined learning objectives. Whether remote or in-person, interns must have access to consistent supervision and mentorship. Well-structured internships contribute to both the intern's development and the success of the partnership.

## Compensation Transparency

It's important to be open about whether an internship is paid, unpaid, or compensated in alternative ways. We understand the differences between volunteer-oriented programs and profit-driven roles. Regardless of context, clarity helps ensure fairness and can even open up dialogue about improving conditions.

## Feedback and Growth

Every internship should include some form of feedback. Whether through informal check-ins or formal evaluations, interns should have the opportunity to reflect on their experience and learn from it.

## Terminology Matters

Clear distinctions between internships, fellowships, and volunteer opportunities help manage expectations. We encourage both members and partner organizations to be transparent about the nature of the opportunity and what support is provided.