



Guide to Industry Internships

Purpose

The IPhO Guide to Industry Internships is designed to serve as a step-by-step guide for pharmacy students interested in pursuing internships at pharmaceutical companies. This document will describe the timeline as well as critical steps that are important when applying for an *internship* position.

*This is **not** a guide to apply for **fellowship** positions.*

Scope

Students pharmacists in all years (including freshman and sophomores) interested in pursuing an industry career are encouraged to seek an industry internship. The following are some key characteristics common among competitive candidates:

- Professional organization leadership roles
- Work experience that translates well to skills relevant to industry employers
- Clinical and or commercial research project participation
- Demonstrated analytical, writing (preferably clinical/ drug information), and project management experience

Industry Internship Database Overview

The database includes companies that currently have or previously had internship positions available. Because the availability of industry internship positions is so varied, it is not possible to identify all of the companies recruiting for positions at any given point in time. For this reason, IPhO recommends that student pharmacists use this database as an excellent starting point from which to start your search. IPhO is committed to updating this catalogue on an ongoing basis and notifying its members when significant updates have been made.

Pharmaceutical companies have different timelines of posting internship listings. Some companies will begin posting internships in November and others can be as late as April. The best practice is to check company websites frequently on a biweekly basis. If a particular internship posting has a deadline, do not wait until the deadline of the internship listing to submit your application. Often times, industry internship positions are competitive and there are many qualified candidates. The earlier you apply, the better your chances. You can access the Internship Catalogue through our [IPhO resources page](#).

The Importance of Networking

When looking for any job opportunity, networking is an essential skill that can boost your candidacy. Pharmacy students from around the country will be applying for the same internships. In order to get advice that can help distinguish you from other candidates, networking with students who have past internship experience, fellows at a specific company targeted, and or professionals with expertise in industry career development can help significantly. To build your professional network, take full advantage of every opportunity to attend industry guest speaker events at your school, career fairs (pharmacy and non-pharmacy), networking events, and national or regional professional organization conferences. Where available, participate in IPhO professional development and networking events. They represent excellent opportunities to build your industry knowledge and network. You never know who you might impress with your industry knowledge and which connection you make that might lead to an internship, fellowship or job!

Which internships can I apply to?

When it comes to obtaining industry experience, the most important step is getting your foot in the door. Students pharmacists are valued highly so even if the job description does not require a pharmacy background, you should still apply! Student pharmacists have accepted positions in a wide variety of departments (such as Finance and Clinical Research), including internships meant for MBA or PhD students. Frequently, internships are also available at Advertising Agencies, Medical Communication companies, Contract Research Organizations, and a variety of consultancies. This is why it's so important to search beyond traditional pharmaceutical manufacturers. Additionally, internships outside of industry which provide analytical, project management, and writing skills will provide key skills and experiences that translate well to industry. If the job description interests, you then there is no harm in applying!

Recommended Process and Timing

1. CV/Resume [October]

- a. Begin updating your CV/resume and LinkedIn with up-to-date information.
 - i. Relevant Coursework
 - Include courses such as drug literature, drug information, drug development).
 - Include any specific therapeutic area that pertains to a particular company's focus. An example would be "Drugs & Diseases: Endocrine System" for Novo Nordisk, since that pharmaceutical company is diabetes-focused.
 - ii. Candidate Experience Preferred
 - Professional organization leadership roles
 - Work experience that translates well to skills relevant to industry employers
 - Clinical and or commercial research project participation
 - Demonstrated analytical, writing (preferably clinical/ drug information), and project management experience
 - iii. Additional Sections
 - Academic and professional honors and awards
 - Specialized training or certifications
 - Publications / presentations
 - Professional activities
- b. Schedule appointments with university career services and or industry-career development professionals to fine-tune and evaluate your resume/CV. (Please see IPhO professional development services at <http://www.industrypharmacist.org/pd.php>)

2. **Internship Search** [November]

- a. Attend live and online professional development and networking programs in order to gain industry knowledge and get a better understanding of different opportunities that exist.
 - i. For internships, pharmacy students can apply to a wide range of positions, not all are clinically-related.

The most common industry commercial functions/ department that provide internship opportunities are likely to be:

- Medical Affairs/ Medical Strategy, Medical Information, Medical Communications, Regulatory Affairs, and Drug Safety
 - Besides from the typical roles, pharmacy students have been accepted in marketing, human resources, business & finance, managed markets, etc.
- b. Talk with upperclassmen, alumni, and fellow colleagues who have completed internships and inquire about specific information about the internship and their experiences.
 - c. Search online via company websites and other resources (such as IPhO, LinkedIn, Indeed) for more information and listings of internships available.
 - i. Each company will post their internships at different times, some as early as November and others as late as April. Check frequently on a bi-weekly basis.

3. **CV/ resume Customization** [Mid-November – December]

It is strongly recommended that CV/resumes intended for industry submission be tailored to optimally communicate skills and experiences that will translate and resonate to industry.

- a. For each internship position, depending upon the specific department function, it may be advantageous for student pharmacists to make additional minor revisions.
 - i. Tailor your resume/CV to include words and experiences that matches similarly with the description and requirements of the internship.
- b. Cover letter
 - i. A cover letter is most often the first impression of your writing skills to a prospective employer. It is generally recommended that cover letters be approximately two-thirds to one page. It should never be more than one page and not be so dense with copy that the reader can't easily identify your key skills and experiences.
 - ii. Identify 2-3 key industry relevant skills required for the position and your experiences that highlight those key skills.
 - iii. Core cover letter components are:
 1. Introductions, referrals if applicable, location obtained information, and intent to apply
 2. Why you are interested in the particular internship
 3. What relevant experiences and related skills that qualify you

4. **Application Submission** [Mid November – December]

- a. Some companies may ask for letters of recommendation.
 - i. Ask relevant advisors, supervisors, preceptors, mentors for letters of recommendation. (Try to tailor each letter of recommendations to reflect different aspects of your application.

- Example A- Solicit one letter to focus on commitment and collaborative attributes
 - Example B- Solicit one letter to focus on skills and achievements
- b. Submit your CV/ resume (if you deem appropriate tailor it to each specific internship)
- i. If there are multiple listings of different internships under the same company, make sure to still tailor each one.

5. Interviews [December → → → May]

- a. Begin researching common interview questions and prepare and practice each unique response so that you become increasingly comfortable.
- b. Most interviewers will ask both behavioral and knowledge-based questions. Many student pharmacists are familiar with the STAR method of responding which is briefly summarized below.
 - i. **S:** Situation – describe a situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish.
 - ii. **T:** Task – what goal were you working toward?
 - iii. **A:** Action – describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What steps did you take and what was **your** particular contribution (not team).
 - iv. **R:** Result – describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure to answer with positive results.

The most important response strategy is to connect your response to your CV/resume and describe how that experience demonstrates specific desired skills. While many students are familiar with the STAR method, it can sometimes be cumbersome and cause your response to be longer than the interviewer would like, based upon the number of questions they have. It's up to the candidate to balance interview responses with short and longer responses based upon the question's difficulty and interview length.

- c. Practice interviewing with friends, family, professors, and/or university career services.
 - i. Be prepared to go in-depth and explain in further detail any experience in your resume/CV.
- d. Some companies will require more than one interview (e.g. one with HR, one with the specific department, and one with the direct manager).
- e. After finishing the interview, write a thank you email to the interviewer and again express your interest.
 - i. Under personal discretion, this may be an opportunity for anything left out during the interview that was not touched upon or explained thoroughly.

6. Internship Search Management

- a. Each company will receive hundreds of applications. The earlier you submit your application, the better your chances.
- b. Constantly check for new internship postings with the companies you are interested in through multiple avenues (company website, LinkedIn, career fairs, networking events, etc.).
- c. Keep applying to more companies! Stay committed and follow-up.

Other Resources

- Professional Networking Websites & Job Search Websites
 - Many companies will post internship/job opportunities on websites such as LinkedIn and Indeed.
 - LinkedIn is a great website not only to network and promote your professional experience, but it can also provide job listings by pharmaceutical companies. Follow the steps below to find out how.
 - LinkedIn
 - For step-by-step instructions with pictures on how to set-up valuable job searches on LinkedIn, refer to our “**LinkedIn Job Alert Guide**” on the [IPhO resources page](#).*
 - Job Search Websites
 - Indeed
 - Looksharp Internships
 - Monster
 - etc.
- University Career Services
 - Explore career services within your local colleges/universities. Some valuable services that students can take advantage of include: job/internship listings, alumni network, and career fairs.

IPhO wishes you the best of luck on your pursuit of an industry internships! We hope this resource will support your ongoing professional development goals.

Please realize that the number of industry internships do not meet the growing volume of interested student pharmacists. While securing an industry internship certainly is a benefit to possible pursuit of an industry fellowship or direct to industry employment, there are other very beneficial and relevant experiences including work, APPEs, and professional leadership contributions that are significant as well.

In summary, the most important strategy to identify and securing an industry internship is to start early. Build your CV/resume by using all resources and opportunities available. Gain significant knowledge about the pharmaceutical industry through participation in professional development and networking programs and acquire the skills desirable to industry employers.

Please contact support@industrypharmacist.org if you know of industry internships not listed in the database. We will gladly add it to our list! Additionally, if any of the positions listed are no longer offered, please let us know so we can remove them to keep the information as current and accurate as possible.

IPhO would like to thank Brian Cheng, St. John’s University School of Pharmacy and IPhO President for his work on this professional development resource.