GUIDE FOR APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS WITH THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The United Nations System

The United Nations is a large and complex global organization created to be an international forum where member nations can collectively address problems which challenge humanity. As such it is involved in matters well beyond promoting peace and security and human rights including normative, development and humanitarian work in practically every field of human activity. Comprising this system are more than 30 entities counting programs, institutes and specialized agencies.

Heading the system is the UN Secretariat which carries out the substantive and administrative work for the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The work of the Secretariat covers a broad array of fields (a list is provided in attachment #1, page 5). In addition, there are a number of UN offices, programs and funds, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), and the UN Environment Program (UNEP), that work to improve the economic and social condition of people around the world. These units report to the General Assembly, some of them through the Economic and Social Council.

There are also "specialized agencies" which are autonomous bodies created by intergovernmental agreement and are linked to the UN through cooperative agreements. They include the World Bank (IBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Some of them, like the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), are older than the UN itself. These organizations have their own governing bodies, budgets and secretariats.

Internships in the UN system

Your professional/academic background is not a limitation to working in the UN. The activities of the UN system cover a broad array of activities and therefore there will likely be some office somewhere where your particular knowledge and skills can be useful. Your academic major may be in a traditional field such as Economics or other Social Science, Natural Science such as Biology, or in a professional field such as Architecture, Engineering, Law, Nutrition, Transportation, etc. and you can be sure that somewhere in the UN system there are offices requiring people with your particular background and interests.

*Internships in the UN system or other international organizations should not be viewed as being solely of interest to students interested in working in international development but should be considered as an opportunity to add an international perspective to any field of studies.*
Conditions and deadlines

The UN intern program generally accepts interns YEAR ROUND for periods from six weeks to six months with internship duration of two to three months being the most common. The UN commits itself to providing the intern with an assignment, a supervisor, and workspace; and, if required by the university in order to give academic credit to the student, the UN will certify that the student satisfactorily completed her/his internship. Most UN system organizations and programs DO NOT provide remuneration of any kind to interns including travel costs and even assistance with obtaining visas (beyond providing necessary letters). Interns are expected to make their own travel and housing arrangements and to finance their internships. There are some exceptions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which offer some compensation as do the regional banks.

Deadlines

Generally the deadline for applying is four months prior to the start of the internship, however the following warning appeared in the UN Secretariat Internships website recently (Take it to heart and assume that it applies across the system):

“No application will be accepted after the deadline! Due to the high volume of applications to process, it is strongly advised to apply at least one month before the deadline.”

Eligibility and qualifications

Internships in the UN system are generally limited to graduate students who are registered at a recognized university or college on a full time basis. Some units also consider advanced undergraduate students. Endorsement by your university is generally required.

Writing and language skills are important, and you must be fluent in English. Being fluent in French and/or Spanish or other official UN language is an asset, but not indispensable. (The six official UN languages are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

General road map to the application process

The major challenge for the applicant is to find where in the broad and complex system her/his area of expertise is relevant since this determines where to apply. Before you set out to navigate the multiplicity of UN system websites to identify those entities, programs or agencies that are relevant to your interests there are three variables which you must consider, they are:

a) What professional field you want to work in.
b) What geographical area you wish to intern in.
c) What sorts of experience are you interested in obtaining (research, operational or administrative).
Step 1 – *Identify agencies and units relevant to your interests:*

The first step is to identify the agencies or programs within the system where your particular background is relevant. This can be quite a task because, since more than likely, there will be several niches where you could intern. There are plenty of overlaps and duplications within the UN system. Take a field like Environmental Protection. The UN Environment Programme (Nairobi) is one unit that works in this particular field, but in the UN Secretariat (New York) you have the Division for Sustainable Development also covering this subject. And then, there are Environmental Protection activities within UNESCO (Paris), WHO (Geneva), UN-HABITAT (Nairobi) and so on. So put your “web surfing” skills to work and explore as many sites as you think may be relevant.

The best place to start “web surfing” is with the website for the UN Headquarters in New York ([http://www.un.org](http://www.un.org)). Identify likely Departments of the Secretariat as well as Programs, Funds and Institutes that may be of interest. Likewise look into specialized agencies, such as UNESCO, FAO, UNIDO, etc. Alternatively you may wish to go directly to the website of particular programs or agencies. The address is usually the name of the unit or agency followed by .org, i.e. unesco.org.

If your criteria includes a geographical preference as to where to intern look for UN offices in that country/region; for example, the UN Secretariat has headquarters locations in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, and Regional Commissions in Addis Ababa, Santiago, Bangkok and Beirut, UNESCO is in Paris, UNICEF in New York, WHO in Geneva, FAO in Rome, and in addition most agencies have regional and some country offices throughout the world. There are UN offices in practically every country in the world.

Step 2 – *Identify office(s) where to apply:*

The next step is to identify where to apply, remember that there is no central office for the entire UN system. For the Secretariat in New York there is an Interns Office within the Office of Human Resource Management, the web address is: [http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/index.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/index.htm). This is an excellent site, but this office does not cover internships available in all UN agencies or even other units beyond the Secretariat (i.e. UNICEF, UNDP which are also located in New York but have separate administrations) so you must find out where to apply from the web site of the particular agency, program or unit you want to intern in. A list of UN offices that take interns is presented in Attachment # 3.

Adding to the confusion is that many agencies with regional and country offices require the interested party to apply directly to the particular regional or country office. For example, you may be interested in interning with UNDP. If the location you prefer is their headquarters in New York, you apply to their personnel office in New York, but if you are interested in working at their regional office for Asia you must apply to Bangkok, or if you want to intern in their country office in India you must apply to New Delhi. Fortunately, every unit’s home page has indications of where to apply and in most cases you can even download the application form from the web.

There not being one central intern’s office for the entire UN system does not mean that you can only apply to only one unit within the system and lose out on the possibility of interning in other units which may also be relevant to your background. What it means is that you must make separate applications, each requiring different application forms. More work for the applicant, but not a limitation. Remember, you may (and should) apply to as many offices as you wish.

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Step 3 – Completing application packets:
Although different units may have different application forms they all are quite similar. In addition to the application form, some offices will ask for a 150 to 250 word statement of purpose, a short résumé of your background, and an endorsement by your university. Transcripts are very rarely requested.

To prepare a good statement of purpose you must know about the work of the unit, not only the subject matter. This means that you must do a certain amount of research on the unit. Again, their web site is a good starting point. Publications in the library should also be consulted. (Cornell University is a depository library for UN publications). Talking with faculty members that have experience and contacts with the UN will also be useful. In general terms the statement must cover how you think the internship will help your professional development AND what you can contribute to the particular unit. The statement must also explain what aspects of your background qualify you for working in that unit, and why you want to intern in an international organization. Be focused and to the point.

The résumé should not exceed two pages and be in bullet form as much as possible. Beyond your academic qualifications and work experience be sure to include other aspects of your background that may make you “different”. Having won awards in sports or the arts may be an indication of an individual that strives to succeed; having cycled for a humanitarian cause may be an indication of an individual who cares about social issues; having lived or even travelled in different countries may have given you a multicultural perspective appropriate for working in the UN, and so on. It is important to include your language abilities.

Step 4 – Submitting your application packets:
Most organizations accept electronic applications but even in such cases it is a good idea to also send a hard copy – clearly noting that it is a copy of the electronic application.

Step 5 – Financial Assistance:
Since the UN will not provide any remuneration you will have to secure support from a third party. Explore potential sources within Cornell AND outside the university. There are foundations and other institutions that provide financial support for internships and study abroad. See Attachment # 2.
ATTACHMENT # 1

NOTES ON INTERNSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Following are notes on several organizations. The list is not exhaustive, if you are interested in interning in an organization not included in this short list you are encouraged to look up the organization in the Web.

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT - http://www.un.org
LOCATION: New York
FIELDS OF WORK: All fields are relevant. A list of professional fields is included in the application form for you to indicate your areas of interest.
TYPE OF WORK: Mostly research and report preparation, also many opportunities in administration and management.
PROCEDURE: Apply online. You will find the necessary information and forms by going to the UN web site and clicking on “Welcome” / “About the United Nations” / “Internships at Headquarters” or go directly to the following: http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/internsh/intern.htm

FIELDS OF WORK AT UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK:
Accounting & Auditing  Economic Research  Public
Administration &  Environmental Affairs  Information/Journalism
Management  Humanitarian Affairs  Social Research
Computer Systems  Law of the Sea  Statistics
Demography  Legal Affairs  Sustainable Development
Development Planning &  Library Science  Translation & Terminology
Analysis  Peacekeeping Operations  Women’s Issues
Disarmament Affairs  Political Affairs

OTHER UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT OFFICES
LOCATION:
• United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) http://www.unog.org
• United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV)  http://www.unov.org
• United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)  http://www.unon.org

FIELDS OF WORK: These are the central administration units for most (but not all) of the UN agencies at that location. Areas of work include human resource management, budgeting, information and conference services.
TYPE OF WORK: Assist in administrative tasks and support to conference services, some technical areas.
PROCEDURE: Refer to the corresponding web site.

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS
LOCATION:
• Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) - Addis Ababa http://www.uneca.org
• Economic and Social Commission for Asia (ESCAP) - Bangkok http://www.unescap.org
• Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) - Santiago  http://www.eclac.cl
• Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) - Beirut http://www.escwa.org.lb

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FIELDS OF WORK: These commissions are involved in similar activities to those of the Secretariat but at the regional level. Areas of work include human resource management, budgeting, information and conference services.

TYPE OF WORK: Assist in administrative tasks and support to conference services, and in support of professional fields similar to the UN Secretariat.

PROCEDURE: Refer to the corresponding web site.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) - http://www.undp.org
LOCATION: New York and about 150 offices around the world.
FIELDS OF WORK: Research, report preparation and management of development activities at country level. Explore the UNDP web site to get an idea of the many different development fields the Organization is involved in.
TYPE OF WORK: Research and assist in project management support.
PROCEDURE: Apply on line, you will find the necessary information and forms by going to the UNDP web site and clicking on “Jobs” / “Internships” or go directly to http://www undp.org/o/hr/Interns/intern.htm. Note that if you are interested in interning in a field office you are asked to apply directly to the country office. All the field offices and their addresses are in the UNDP web site.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDRENS FUND (UNICEF) - http://www.unicef.org
LOCATION: New York and regional and country offices around the world.
FIELDS OF WORK: Fields related to children’s welfare (very broadly defined). Explore the UNICEF web site to get an idea of the different activities of the Organization.
TYPE OF WORK: Research and report preparation at headquarters and field offices, also possible to engage in project management support in some field offices.
PROCEDURE: Apply on line, you will find the necessary information and forms by going to the UNICEF web site and clicking on “About UNICEF” / “Employment” / “Internship Programme” or go directly to http://www.unicef.org/employ/Intern.htm. Note that if you are interested in interning in a field office you are asked to identify up to three countries you would like to work in.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) - http://www.fao.org
LOCATION: Rome and some offices around the world.
FIELDS OF WORK: Fields related to agriculture and forestry. Explore the FAO web site to get an idea of the different activities of the Organization.
TYPE OF WORK: Research and report preparation at headquarters and field offices, also possible to engage in project management support in some field offices.
PROCEDURE: You will find the necessary information and forms on line by going to the FAO web site and clicking “Employment” / “Volunteer Programme” or go directly to http://www.fao.org/VA/vol.htm.
NOTE: If your area of expertise is agriculture you may wish to explore the web site of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) at http://www.ifad.org. If your interest is in food assistance you may wish to consult the web site of the World Food Programme at http://www.wfp.org/. Both of these organizations are located in Rome but have offices in other countries.
UNUNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) - [http://www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)
LOCATION: Nairobi and other locations around the world.
FIELDS OF WORK: Environment related fields. UNEP oversees the Secretariats for UN conventions on various environment related subjects. Explore the UNEP web site to get an idea of the different activities of the Organization.
TYPE OF WORK: Mostly research and report preparation.
PROCEDURE: Apply on line, you will find the necessary information and forms by going to the UNEP web site and clicking on “Jobs and Training” / “UNEP Internships” or go directly to the following: [http://www.unep.org/Vac/Internship/](http://www.unep.org/Vac/Internship/). You may also apply through UNON (see above).

UNUNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (HABITAT) - [http://www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)
LOCATION: Nairobi and other locations around the world.
FIELDS OF WORK: Human settlements development and housing related fields. Explore the Habitat web site to get an idea of the different activities of the Organization.
TYPE OF WORK: Research, and report preparation and technical assistance project work.
PROCEDURE: Apply on line, you will find the necessary information and forms by going to the HABITAT web site and clicking on “Employment Opportunities” / “Internships at Headquarters” or go directly to: [http://www.unhabitat.org/vacancy/internship.asp](http://www.unhabitat.org/vacancy/internship.asp). Note that for offices away from headquarters applicants are required to contact those offices directly. You may also apply through UNON (see above).

OTHER UNITED NATIONS OFFICES AND AGENCIES:

INTERNATIONAL COURT AND TRIBUNALS:
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) – Arusha – [http://www.ictr.org](http://www.ictr.org)

MULTILATERAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS:
Multilateral financial institutions also have internship programs, what is more at least some of them do pay a stipend (The Inter-American Development Bank for example). Again, the starting point should be consulting the web site of the institution and obtaining the application forms. These institutions include:

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- Islamic Development Bank – Jeddah - [www.isdb.org](http://www.isdb.org)
ATTACHMENT # 2

SOURCES OF INTERNSHIP FUNDING

International/Worldwide Scholarship Programs:
- IEE, International Institute for Education http://www.iie.org/

World Bank Scholarship Programs
- Through its management of the Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Program (JJ/WBGSP) and The Robert S. McNamara Fellowships Programme, the World Bank Institute provides opportunities for Graduate study and research to promising professionals from developing member countries. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/EXTWBISFP/0,,menuPK:551559~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:551553,00.html

Asian Development Bank
- The Asian Development Bank has various types of fellowships available. We suggest that you contact their local office in your own country for more information. http://www.adb.org/JSP/default.asp

Rotary Club
- The Rotary Club offers scholarships through their Ambassadorial Scholarships Programme.

Open Society Institute & Soros Foundations Network
- The Open Society Institute (OSI), a private foundation, aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights, and economic, legal, and social reform. http://www.soros.org/grants

The Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs
- Each year the Carnegie Council offers up to six non-residential fellowships to mid-career scholars, practitioners, journalists, and other professionals, selected from a pool of hundreds of applicants. The successful candidates have research proposals that closely match the Carnegie Council’s ongoing areas of study: Human Rights, Ethics and the Use of Force, Reconciliation, Environmental Values, and Justice and the World Economy.

American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Career Development Grants support women from developing countries who are preparing to advance their careers, change careers, or re-enter the work force. Special consideration is given to AAUW members, women of color, and women pursuing their first advanced degree or credentials in non-traditional fields. http://www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/career_development.cfm

American Women for International Understanding (AWIU)
- American Women for International Understanding (AWIU) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization. Members seek to acquire knowledge through study, travel, and symposia designed to develop international understanding, especially among women. The principal educational purposes of AWIU are accomplished through a grant program offered worldwide to women who speak English, are

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ambitious and enterprising in their home and communities, and who could even be considered as future leaders in their communities.  

**West African Research Center Travel Grant**
- The West African Research Centre in Dakar, Senegal is offering travel bursaries to scholars and graduate students of West African nationality. The sojourns should be connected with a research interest.  
  

**Ford Foundation**
- The Ford Foundations is a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide. Its priorities are to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. The site provides information and guidelines for grant seekers, including instructions about how to apply for a grant, and frequently asked questions about the Foundation.  
  
  [http://www.fordfound.org/about/guideline.cfm](http://www.fordfound.org/about/guideline.cfm)

**Internet homepages with useful information about scholarships:**
- [http://www.iss.nl/navFrame/frame2.html?content=/index.html](http://www.iss.nl/navFrame/frame2.html?content=/index.html)
- [http://www.africanconservation.org/cgi-bin/dcforum/dcboard.cgi](http://www.africanconservation.org/cgi-bin/dcforum/dcboard.cgi) (see “Fellowships & Funding Opportunities” at the bottom )
- [http://www.ned.org/research/funding/democracyfunding.html](http://www.ned.org/research/funding/democracyfunding.html)
- [http://www.asr.org/resources/4.html](http://www.asr.org/resources/4.html)
- [http://www.altillo.com/becas/index.asp](http://www.altillo.com/becas/index.asp) (scholarships for students from: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela)
- [http://www.iaf.gov/grants/apply_grant_en.asp](http://www.iaf.gov/grants/apply_grant_en.asp) (Scholarship possibilities for Latin American Students)
- [http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/funding?CFID=100835&CFTOKEN=54064761](http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/funding?CFID=100835&CFTOKEN=54064761)
- [http://www.internationalstudent.com/scholarships/](http://www.internationalstudent.com/scholarships/)
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LIST OF UN BODIES THAT TAKE INTERNS (Consult web sites)

(The location of the main headquarters is indicated, many have offices in other locations)

- United Nations Headquarters (UN), New York
- Economic and Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Santiago
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome
- International Court of Justice (ICJ), The Hague
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Arusha
- International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), The Hague
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome
- International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva
- International Maritime Organization (IMO), London
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington
- International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva
- International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITC-ILO), Turin
- International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Hamburg
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Geneva
- United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), New York
- United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat/UNCHS), Nairobi
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi
- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), Vienna
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Bonn
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), New York
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Geneva
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris
- UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Bonn
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), Geneva
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHABITAT), Nairobi
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna
• United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), Geneva
• United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Geneva - Diplomacy and International Affairs Management
• United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Geneva - Debt, Financial Management and Negotiation
• United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Geneva - Application of International Environmental Law
• United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Geneva - Climate Change Training Programme
• United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), Geneva
• United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok
• United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Santo Domingo
• United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Rome
• United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), Vienna
• United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP), Vienna
• United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP), Liaison Office with the European Institutions, Brussels
• United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), New York
• United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), New York
• United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Geneva
• United Nations Staff College (UNSC), Turin
• United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo and New York
• World Bank, Washington D.C.
• World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), New York and Geneva
• World Food Program (WFP), Rome
• World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva
• World Tourism Organization (WTO), Madrid
• World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva