



Internship Policy

GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

Effective: February 2023

Policy Statement

Internships are a recruitment mechanism targeted toward engaging Cook Islands secondary students, tertiary students, volunteers and graduates to work within the Cook Islands Public Sector.

Interns are not to be recruited into vacant roles, as a means to fill a vacancy, but can move into those roles following the end of their internship and in adherence with the Recruitment Policy.

Scope

This Policy is to encourage the recruitment of Cook Islands secondary students, tertiary students and graduates to work within the Public Sector.

The two main types of Interns covered under this Policy include:

- Casual or volunteer employees who can be employed to work for up to three months, paid or unpaid;
- Full or part time employees who can be employed to work for a period over three months and for a maximum of two years in a paid capacity.

This Policy does not cover internships or arrangements:

- Initiated by overseas Governments e.g. Australian Colombo Plan.
- Between an agency and an overseas organisation (e.g. Universities).

Principles

The Public Service Act 2009 provides the following values Public Servants must adhere to:

Honesty	Acting honestly, being truthful, and abiding by the laws of the Cook Islands
Impartiality	Providing impartial advice, acting without fear or favour, and making decisions on their merits
Service	Serving the people well through faithful service to the Government of the Cook Islands
Respect	Treating the people, the Government of the Cook Islands, and colleagues with courtesy and respect
Transparency	Taking actions and making decisions in an open and transparent way
Accountability	Being able to explain the reason for actions taken, and taking responsibility for those actions
Efficiency and Effectiveness	Achieving good results for the Cook Islands in an economical way

The duty to act as a good employer requires employers to develop and implement personnel policies which ensure the fair and proper treatment of employees during employment, including the impartial recruitment of employees, employee capability development opportunities and good and safe working conditions.

Legislation

Public Service Act 2009, Employment Relations Act 2012 (ERA) and other relevant legislation apply.

Definitions

Casual Employee means an employee who works irregular or intermittent hours, on an hourly pay rate.

Employee means a person engaged to work under an employment agreement. It does not include an independent contractor/consultant engaged under a contract for services

Employer means the Public Service Commissioner or a Head of Public Sector Agency or their delegated authority.

Employee benefits are benefits available to employees which may include, but are not limited to: leave, superannuation, motor vehicle and phone use.

Full Time Employee means an employee who works a minimum of 35 hours per week and has regular hours of work each week and has a reasonable expectation to be employed for at least 35 hours per week.

Intern refers to a secondary student, tertiary student, graduate or volunteer who works, with or without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification.

Minimum Working Age the minimum working age is above 13 years and employers must not employ students during normal school hours or for more than 10 hours per week outside normal school hours, or for work other than light work as defined in the ERA 2012 Section 30.

Part Time Employee means an employee who works less than 35 hours per week, with regular hours of work each week and have a reasonable expectation of working these hours each week.

Public Sector includes Public Service Departments, Island Governments, Crown Agencies, Ministerial Support Offices and State Owned Enterprises.

Public Service Commissioner means the Public Service Commissioner appointed under Article 73 of the Constitution and Section 5 of the Public Service Act.

Volunteers refers to a person who works irregular or intermittent hours for a short term work assignment without pay.

Procedures

Employers are responsible for administering this Policy. Interns must ensure they read, understand and comply with this Policy. Breaches of this Policy may be considered misconduct and subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal.

Internships

Internships provide secondary students, tertiary students, graduates or volunteers practical work experience relating to their field of study. Internships also provide employers the opportunity to recruit students to provide work experience and assess their suitability for future employment. Internships have a strong emphasis on training, and may be paid or unpaid. Interns can apply for vacancies within the agency upon successful completion of the Internship.

Employer benefits

- Source of fresh, diverse or innovative ideas for the agency
- An opportunity to recruit, train, and influence Interns for future employment particularly in areas where skill gaps have been identified.
- An additional resource to assist with agency work or fixed-term project work.
- An opportunity for existing employees to coach, mentor and develop leadership skills.
- Promotes rapid integration of Interns into full time positions, should they become available.

Intern benefits

Gain work experience and skills.

- Exposure to real world scenarios.
- May gain course credits for study programme (if applicable).
- Gain knowledge of the management and organisational culture of the agency.

Internships are available to:

- Secondary students (refer to minimum working age).
- Tertiary students.
- Graduates.
- Overseas based Cook Islands students.
- Volunteers.

Overseas based students must be willing to travel to the Cook Islands at their own cost to undertake an internship.

Managing Interns

Employers are responsible for managing Interns and must consider the following:

- Purpose and duration of the internship.
- Training and people resourcing required to support the Interns.
- Casual employment will mean Interns are not entitled to employee benefits.
- Full time or part time Interns must be engaged as paid employees, and will be entitled to employee benefits.
- If the internship is a paid position, Agencies have to ensure availability of Budget to cover this cost as well as equipment to carry out their duties (laptop, etc.).

Employer obligations relating to full or part time Interns

- Full or part time intern positions, who are paid from the personnel budget line must be on the agencies organisational structure.
- Full or part time Intern positions must be recruited using the Recruitment Policy.
- The employment agreement with the Intern must include a training and development plan
- Employment disputes must be resolved using the Employment Disputes Policy.
- All interns shall be provided with an Agency induction and attend the Public Service induction run by OPSC.
- In addition to supervision, a performance evaluation, or as a minimum, an Exit Interview is conducted for interns at the end of their term.

Intern Obligations

- Interns must comply with their employment agreement and training and development plan.
- Interns must comply with the Public Service Code of Conduct and Values, including all relevant Government policies and legislation.

Terminations

Employment agreements can be terminated:

- At the end of the Internship contracted period;
- If both employer and employee agree to end the Internship prior to end date;
- If the employment agreement conditions permitting termination are met, including resignation.

Employers are encouraged to seek feedback from Interns on how to improve service delivery and agency operations. Exit interview should be conducted in accordance with the CIGOV Leaving the Service Policy.

Other provisions

All records relating to the administration of this Policy must be kept for at least seven years for audit purposes and are only accessible by the employer and/or authorised staff. After the required seven year period, the agency may destroy the documentation in adherence with Government official information management policies.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is responsible for reviewing and/or updating this Policy and associated documents as the need arises.

Associated Documents

Notice of Appointment Form
Recruitment Policy
Contracting for Services Policy
Remuneration Policy
Performance Management Policy
Employment Disputes Policy
Leaving the Service Policy

Other information

For policy queries contact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner on phone (682) 29421 or email: pscinfo@cookislands.gov.ck