

TRAVEL AGENT INTERNSHIP GUIDE



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WHAT IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is for travel agents who are currently participating in internship programmes or are considering to do so, to plan meaningful internships for interns and their company. The guide will detail why travel agents should make use of such internship programmes and how to maximise the benefits that can be reaped for both the interns and the company.



WHY SHOULD TRAVEL AGENTS VALUE INTERNSHIPS?

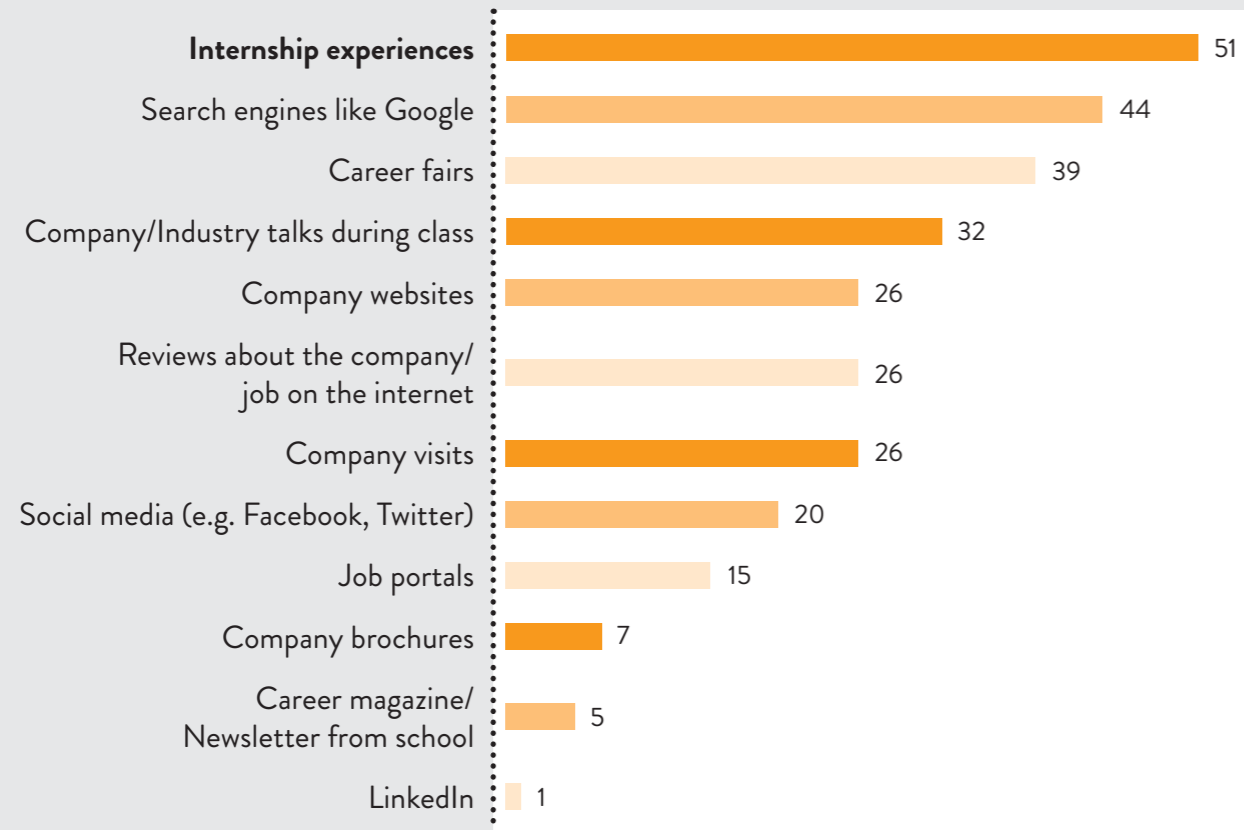
Internships give students exposure to the working environment of travel agents through on-the-job experience. These experiences are valuable to students for them to understand what the job and industry is all about. It also provides great opportunities for them to engage directly with people who have experience in the role.

A recent survey¹ found that internship experience is the top source of career information for polytechnic and ITE students that influence their job and career choice. This means that internships with travel agents will influence students in their decisions if the travel agent industry is something they want to pursue as a career.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION THAT STUDENTS FIND MOST USEFUL IN INFLUENCING THEIR JOB AND CAREER CHOICES

%

of students who listed among their Top 3

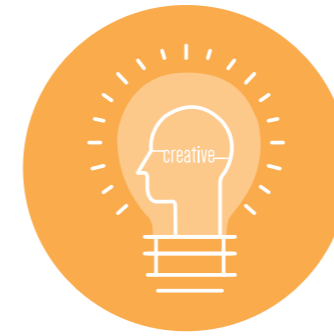


¹Young Talent Attraction Survey conducted by the Singapore Tourism Board in 2016

What does this mean for travel agents?

Travel agents have a higher chance of converting interns into full-time positions if the interns were provided with a good internship experience.

Travel agents can also stand to gain from the diverse and unique viewpoints of a young intern. Here are some of the benefits that travel agents have told us about their experience with interns:



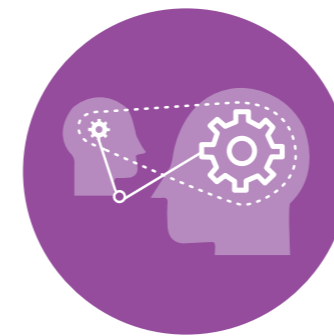
FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Interns bring with them a fresh perspective on the travel agent industry, and these fresh perspectives can help with problem solving and generation of new ideas.



TECH-SAVVY

Interns are part of the tech-savvy generation and could provide good insights into social media platforms.



CONNECTION

Interns with good relationships with their company and mentors could help to spread awareness on the company to their peers.



BUILDING OF NURTURING CULTURE

Internship programmes help to build the supervisors' and junior management's leadership abilities, thereby strengthening the nurturing culture within one's company (refer to section on "Designate an Intern Mentor", page 11).

What does this mean for travel agents?

A good internship experience will not only benefit the interns, but will also add great value to the company.

► DESIGNING A GOOD INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

There are four easy steps to designing a good internship experience. These help to not only improve the intern's learning but also ensure that your company increases the probability to attract and retain new talents.



STEP 1 DETERMINE THE JOB SCOPE

Identifying areas of work that an intern can undertake



STEP 2 CREATE A CLEAR JOB DESCRIPTION

Drafting easy-to-understand job descriptions



STEP 3 PROVIDE ORIENTATION AND SUPPORT

Establishing a good foundation for the intern



STEP 4 DESIGNATE AN INTERN MENTOR

Guiding interns to their fullest potential

4 STEPS TO DESIGNING A GOOD INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

STEP 1 DETERMINE THE JOB SCOPE

It is important and necessary for companies to do pre-internship planning to identify areas that they are able to benefit from having an intern onboard, as well as benefits they can bring to the intern.

Below are some guiding questions and examples to help you when planning for an internship programme:

Internship Portfolio and Learning Opportunities

- A** What are some of the projects, roles or responsibilities that can be assigned to the intern?
- B** Are the tasks listed in **A** realistically achievable during the internship period?
- C** Do the tasks listed in **A** allow the intern to gain additional skills and knowledge about the industry?
- D** What are some of the meetings that the intern can attend to give them a chance to learn from senior management?
- E** How may the intern be exposed to various job functions in the company?



Case Study

At Universal Travel Corporation, interns are given the opportunity to experience the entire tour package development process. This includes the planning of the tour itinerary, development of tour product, liaison with the operators, to the sale of the final tour product.

The interns derived strong job satisfaction from taking ownership of the project. This programme also exposed the interns to various job functions involved in the making of a tour.

STEP 2 CREATE A CLEAR JOB DESCRIPTION

A job description (JD) is your first contact point with potential interns. A well-written JD will ensure that you hire an intern who is aware of the expectations the position entails. It should also be viewed as a marketing tool to help you attract top interns.

Things to Include in a JD:

▶ Job title

Use a descriptive title for the type of internship you are offering, for example, “Local Tours Development Intern”, “e-Services Development Intern”, etc.

▶ Job Description

- Briefly outline your company’s mission, purpose and main product offerings
- Details of key responsibilities and deliverables
- Learning outcomes for intern
- Unique internship experiences (e.g. opportunities to shadow a tour/site visits etc.)
- Description of an ideal candidate

USEFUL PHRASES:

- The ideal candidate should possess the following skills...
- You will get the chance to work on exciting projects like...
- This is an exciting opportunity for anyone interested in a career in the tourism industry...
- The intern will be working closely with the Marketing Manager/ Director/CEO...
- You will gain hands-on experience in...
- ... will add value to your development as a professional in the field.

☑ DO

- Use a personal tone (e.g. “You will handle/you will learn...”)
- Keep it short and concise
- Highlight the learning experience provided for the intern
- Use energetic language (e.g. “This is a great opportunity...”)

☒ DON'T

- Leave out the summary of your company – students will not apply if they do not know what the company does
- Fluff up the job description – if administration work is required, let the student know how often such tasks will be required. Administrative work should take up no more than 20% of an intern’s duties
- Use industry terms and jargon that students might not understand

EXAMPLE OF INTERNSHIP JOB DESCRIPTION

TOUR DEVELOPMENT INTERN

We are a Singapore-based inbound travel agency that aims to provide tourists with customised packages and specially curated tours to fit each of their unique needs. Our in-house developed tours allow our tourists to experience Singapore through an engaging story-telling format and immersive in-depth experiences that showcase our unique local culture and habits.

You will be responsible for working with a small team to identify gaps in the market and design new tours that will add value to our current portfolio of tours. You should be able to think creatively, work with many different stakeholders and be capable of adapting to different situations.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Liaison with various stakeholders within the tourism industry
- On-ground experience of existing tours and operations
- Hands-on tour designing and planning
- Participation in regular staff meetings and group brainstorming
- Overview of travel industry and tour trends
- Understanding of inbound tourism and the role of overseas partners

REQUIREMENTS

- Must be a team-player
- Possess good communication skills
- Able to think out of the box
- Passionate and self-motivated

SCHEDULE AND COMPENSATION

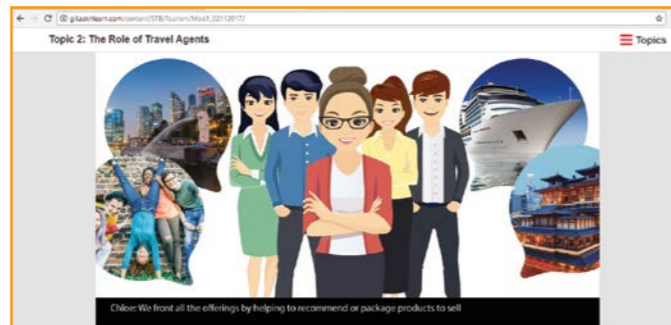
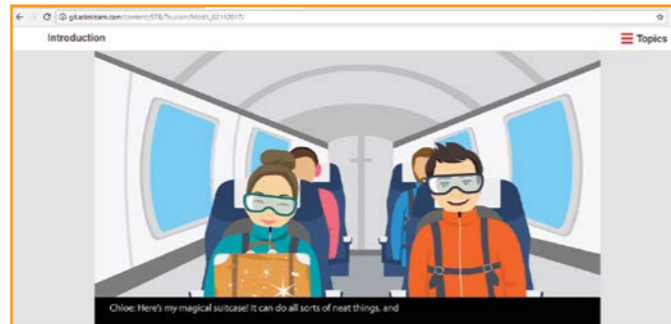
- 9am – 6pm Monday to Friday, except public holidays
- \$800 per month

STEP 3 PROVIDE ORIENTATION AND SUPPORT

Orientation and support are important as they lay the foundation for the intern and shorten the time the intern would take to be a productive member of the company.

ONBOARDING GUIDE BY STB AND NATAS

STB and NATAS have developed an Onboarding Guide for new entrants to the travel agent industry. You can use this as part of your orientation process for your interns. As an e-Learning module, it will enable you to check if the intern has successfully completed it. Access it at: bit.ly/guidetoTA. You may also download the pdf version at bit.ly/taroadmap as your browsing copy.



Intern Orientation and Support

Below are some questions to guide you to determine orientation materials and opportunities that are necessary for your intern to do his/her job well:

A What are some of the essential information to be communicated to the intern during orientation?

This should include (but not limited to):

- Background and information on your company
- Their roles and responsibilities
- Your expectations for them
- How they are being evaluated

B Is any form of training necessary for the intern to carry out their assigned tasks effectively?

C What are some useful resources that should be made available to the intern?

e.g. reading materials, reports

D Who may be assigned to guide and support the intern?

e.g. supervisor, buddy, mentor



Case Study

At Stamford Discovery Cruise Centre, there are clear guidelines and procedures developed to guide the interns on the sale of tour packages. In addition, close monitoring and support is provided to help the interns carry out their tasks effectively.



BUDDY SYSTEM

A buddy system is an onboarding and knowledge sharing method to help with orientating interns. A buddy is someone who is assigned to partner with the intern for the duration of the internship to provide insights into the day-to-day activities of the company and help the intern fit in quickly with the company's culture.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The buddy can motivate the interns and be a working level point-of-contact that the intern feels comfortable to ask any questions that they might have about work or working with other people. The support can make a huge difference in helping interns perform and integrate well with the other employees and company.

The buddy system can also develop the buddy's skills. By teaching and guiding the intern, the buddy will also develop their own skills and improve their leadership abilities.



WHO CAN BE A BUDDY?

Any current employee who has been working at the company for some time could potentially be a buddy. The selected buddy should have a good work performance history, be someone that other employees like and respect, and ideally someone that is positive about the company's culture and future. Most importantly, a buddy should be able to set aside time on top of their current work to provide guidance and support to the intern.

STEP 4 DESIGNATE AN INTERN MENTOR

INTERN MENTORSHIP

Intern mentorship is the practice of coaching, teaching and assessing the intern. This is usually undertaken by someone experienced and/or knowledgeable, for the purpose of career and personal development. This typically takes place face-to-face over a sustained period of time.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Mentors can provide useful guidance and support during the course of internship which will allow interns to grow and develop to their fullest potential.

WHO CAN BE A MENTOR?

It should be someone who has sufficient experience and knowledge to guide, encourage and inspire the intern. The mentor should be a good listener, patient, and interested in the personal growth of the intern. Travel agents should strive to groom their junior management/supervisors to be able to take on mentorship roles with confidence and skill. The opportunity to serve as an intern mentor is a good starting point for leadership training.



Case Study

At Flight Centre Travel Group, the interns' learning and work progress are taken seriously. Directors/leaders are directly responsible for the personal growth of the interns. Leaders take time to mentor their interns every 2-3 weeks, documenting their areas of growth and work progress. HR also has separate monthly meetings with the interns, to provide the interns with an additional perspective on their performance and progress.

Pointers for Mentors

A MENTORING SKILLS

The key skills listed below will help you build a strong rapport with the intern and establish a positive, accepting environment that allows for open communication. This is needed for mentorship to be effective.



LISTEN ACTIVELY

- Display positive body language like making eye contact, nodding
- Give the intern a chance to thoroughly express their issue, question or concern before giving advice



BUILD TRUST

- Be honest with the intern
- Keep all conversations with the intern confidential
- Honour the scheduled meetings



DETERMINE GOALS

- Share your experience with the intern and ask the intern to share what they hope to gain from the mentorship
- Help the intern to identify and achieve his/her own goals
- Impart knowledge and skills through explaining, demonstrating, questioning and giving of examples
- Help the intern find useful resources such as books, articles, studies, tools, web-based information or people



ENCOURAGE AND INSPIRE

- Respond to the intern's frustrations and challenges with words of support, understanding and encouragement
- Give praise for accomplishments when due
- Share personal experiences, mistakes and successes in your career, and journey in achieving goals

B INTERNSHIP CHECKLISTS

It is important for you to document and monitor an intern's progress. This can be done by developing a checklist to be used during mentoring sessions. The checklist(s) will help to structure discussions with the intern and track the intern's progress as well as areas of improvement.

A sample "Mentoring Checklist" can be found on the following page. You should look through all the skills and competencies required of the intern and customise the checklist accordingly, taking care to exclude items that are not relevant.

The skills can also be determined from the "Intern Goal-Setting Form" (see page 16-17), which you could ask the intern to fill up at the start of the internship. This would ensure that you are aware of the intern's interest and help the intern work towards the same goals.

Editable copies of both documents can be accessed at: bit.ly/taroadmap



C MENTORING SESSIONS

Exchange contact details with the intern to allow for easy communication.

Set aside sufficient time for your first meeting with the intern. Prior to the meeting, obtain their information from HR so that you are familiar with their course of study. Use the time to get to know the intern better. You may choose to conduct the first meeting at a café or external location away from office.

You should ideally conduct a minimum of one mentoring session per month with the intern over the internship period.



D FEEDBACK

Reflect on your mentoring and ask the intern to provide feedback. Mentorship not only benefits the intern, but it also helps you learn through guiding others and become a better leader.



E KEEP IN TOUCH

Mentorship does not necessarily end once the internship is over. Mentors can keep in touch with the interns as they return to school and continue to provide advice and guidance. Maintaining the relationship will make it easier to recruit the intern as a full-time staff, and open a channel of communication to reach out to other students through the intern.



▶ TO BE COMPLETED BY THE MENTOR ◀

EXAMPLE OF MENTORING CHECKLIST



Download editable copy at
bit.ly/taroadmap

Intern _____ Date of meeting _____

Below Expectations - Adequate performance with some areas of concern

Meets Expectations - Delivering expectations with some areas of high performance

Exceeds Expectations - Displays high level capability with consistency

Performance	Check Appropriate Box			Comments
	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	
1. Job Performance • Exhibits good knowledge of products and services provided • Able to perform assigned tasks				
2. Resourcefulness & Creativity • Able to react well to new or difficult situations • Finds creative solutions to problems faced, shows innovative thinking				
3. Team Work • Understands the value of team work • Demonstrates behaviour that promotes team work				
4. Client/Stakeholder Satisfaction • Fosters trust and builds relationship with clients/stakeholders • Anticipates needs and exceeds expectations				
5. Time Management • Effectively attends to job requirements • Meets all deadlines consistently				
6. Decision Making • Handles challenges and feedback effectively • Exhibits responsibility and accountability over problems and mistakes				
7. Adaptability • Able to cope with demands and expectations • Adapts to changes and varying situations well				
8. Communication • Communicates with internal and external stakeholders clearly and concisely				

Overall Comments:

▶ TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INTERN ◀

EXAMPLE OF INTERN GOAL-SETTING FORM

Name _____ Internship period _____

Take some time to think through the personal and career goals you hope to achieve through this internship and mentorship programme. Discuss your goals with your mentor and examine your progress periodically.

GOAL 1	Why is this your goal?
	What are some of the potential barriers to success?
	What are the resources and support you require to achieve this goal?
	How will you measure your progress towards achieving this goal?

GOAL 2	Why is this your goal?
	What are some of the potential barriers to success?
	What are the resources and support you require to achieve this goal?
	How will you measure your progress towards achieving this goal?

GOAL 3	Why is this your goal?
	What are some of the potential barriers to success?
	What are the resources and support you require to achieve this goal?
	How will you measure your progress towards achieving this goal?

GOAL 4	Why is this your goal?
	What are some of the potential barriers to success?
	What are the resources and support you require to achieve this goal?
	How will you measure your progress towards achieving this goal?



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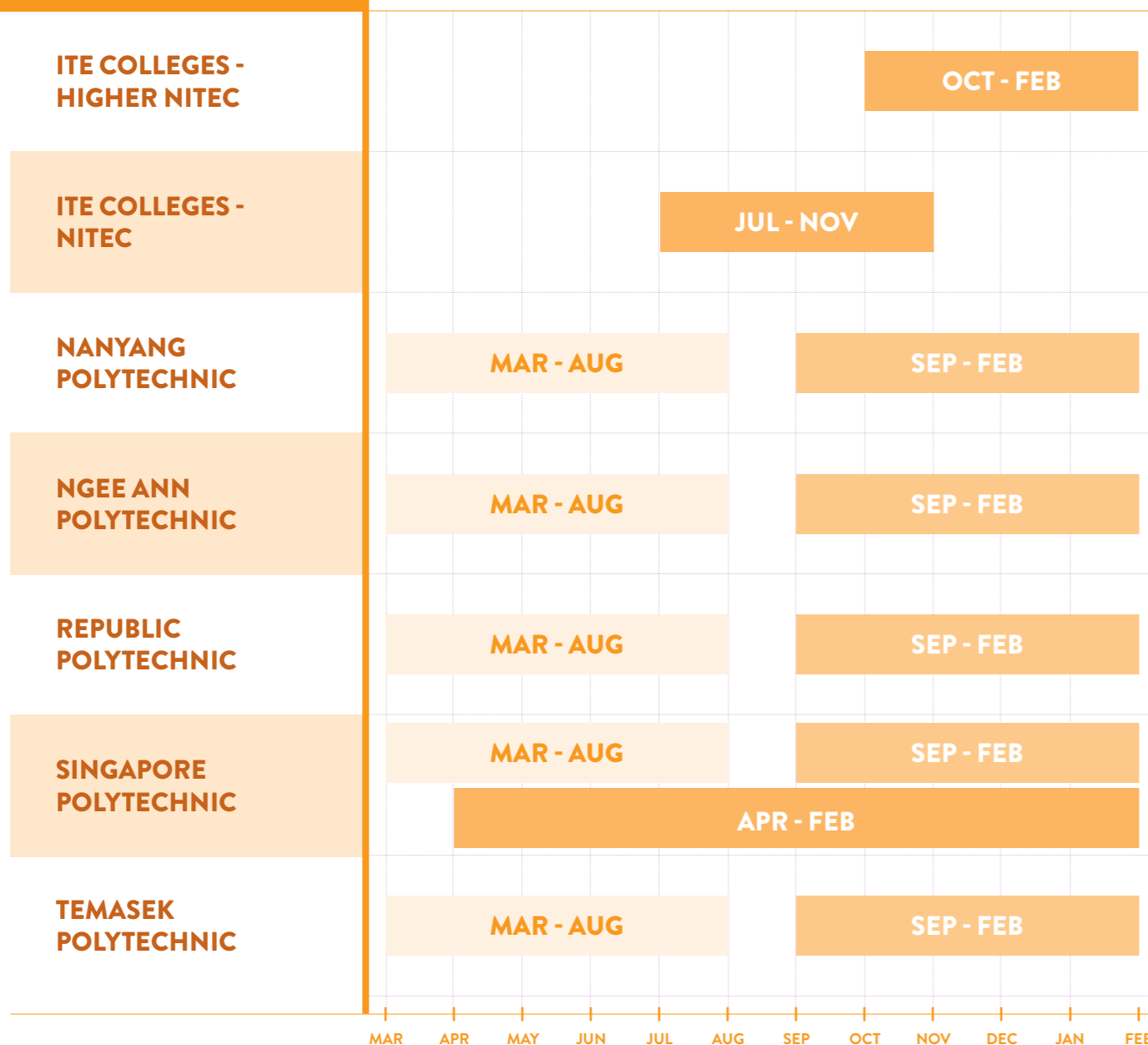
► INFORMATION FROM POLYTECHNICS AND ITE COLLEGES



Internship timetable

Most schools offer two cycles of internship. As a general rule of thumb, travel agents should submit application forms to request for interns around four months before the start of the internship period.

LIST OF INSTITUTIONS



ALLOWANCE

- Most institutions have a different recommended minimum allowance by sector, which ranges from \$500 – \$1100
- The average minimum allowance is around \$600
- Employers are exempted from CPF contribution



WORKING HOURS/ CONDITIONS

- Total number of working hours for an intern should not exceed 12 hours (per day), 44 hours (per week) and 72 overtime hours (per month)
- Overtime work should be mutually agreed upon
- Off-in-lieu or overtime pay is expected for work beyond 44 hours per week
- Overtime pay should be no less than 1.5 times the hourly basic rate of pay
- Interns should be given reasonable break time for meals



MANPOWER COMMITMENT BY THE TRAVEL AGENT

- **1 supervisor** to oversee the performance and progress of the intern. In some cases, the supervisor might be required to plan and discuss internship requirements with the school liaison officer, and meet up with the liaison officer during their visits to the company to check-in on the intern
- **1 mentor** with preferably more than or at least 5 years of industry experience, good knowledge of sector and interpersonal skills



WORKING PERMIT FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS

- Full-time foreign students are exempted from work permit requirements



INSURANCE

- Covered by the school









GOVERNMENT FUNDING SUPPORT

- SMEs can receive up to 70% funding support to cover the internship stipend under the SME Talent Programme offered by SPRING

Note: Applicable only for Singaporean students

Website:



	LEAVE	WEBSITE
NANYANG POLYTECHNIC		
REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interns are not allowed to take personal leave • Compassionate leave, medical leave, emergency leave, leave of absence (for official reasons) are allowed • Must be approved by both the company and the polytechnic 	
SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC		
TEMASEK POLYTECHNIC		
NGEE ANN POLYTECHNIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies are strongly encouraged to give interns annual leave in accordance with HR policies; approximately 2 days for a 4-month internship and 3 days for a 6-month internship • Medical and compassionate leave is allowed • Must be approved by both the company and the polytechnic 	
ITE COLLEGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per company policy 	

This publication serves as a reference for Singapore's travel agent industry. All information in this publication is deemed to be correct at time of publication.

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