

## Internships in industry - Guidelines

for IC students, professors and companies hosting Master's students in Computer Science, Communication Systems, Data Science and Cyber Security

### Introduction

Students enrolled in a Master's program leading to an engineering degree must complete a compulsory industry internship prior to graduation. The goal is to provide students with the opportunity to gain practical experience in industry to complement their academic knowledge. They have the option of completing their internship in Switzerland or abroad.

Internships cannot be done in academia (schools, universities, etc.).

### Internship formats, conditions, and duration

#### ➤ Short internships

- Duration : 8 weeks minimum, full-time
- When : during the summer only (July & August)
- Where : in a company
- Supervision : mandatory validation by the section prior to the starting date

#### ➤ Long internships\*

- Duration : 6 months, full-time
- When : during the Spring semester starting as of February 15  
during the Autumn semester starting as of July 15
- Where : in a company
- Supervision : mandatory validation by the section prior to the starting date

(\*) During a long internship, students are on sabbatical leave but continue to be registered at EPFL subject to a reduced tuition fee of CHF 50.- (status in IS-Academia is "internship"). Master regulations stipulate that **no courses may be taken in parallel** during a long internship.

#### ➤ Master's project in industry<sup>1</sup>

- Duration : 6 months (25 weeks + 1 week vacation for Easter or Christmas)
- When : Autumn semester: from August 1 to October 1  
→ Cyber security students: from September 1 to October 1  
Spring semester: from February 15 to March 1
- Where : in a company
- Supervision : supervised by an IC accredited faculty member

*Master's projects should start on a Monday and the report (thesis) submitted on a Friday at noon. Under no circumstances can the Master's project begin before the successful completion of the Master's cycle (or the conditional admission to the Master's project).*

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the [Master's project regulations](#) for more information.

## **Difference between an internship and a Master's project in industry**

There are important academic and administrative differences between an internship and a Master's project in industry. During an internship, the student is employed by and supervised by a company. A Master's project, on the other hand, supervision is ensured by an EPFL faculty member. Consequently, a student cannot make a commitment to a company for a Master's project in industry without first obtaining the approval of an EPFL faculty member who will supervise the project.

Accordingly, the topic of a Master's project in industry must be a research topic related to innovation. Internships, on the other hand, have a more flexible focus that can encompass various aspects of the engineering profession without the same innovation-oriented restriction.

From an administrative standpoint, students carrying out a Master's project in industry do not require formal employment by the company since the project is considered an academic requirement, overseen by EPFL. This means that students of any nationality can undertake a Master's project in industry without the need for an additional work authorization, provided they possess a valid student permit from EPFL.

## **Internship Agreement**

For a short or long internship, EPFL requires an *Internship Agreement* to be signed by the company, the student and EPFL (represented by the Section Deputy). An editable Word file of the *EPFL Internship Agreement* can be found on this [link](#). This document regulates all aspects of the internship (tasks, remuneration, working hours, start and end dates, etc.). It is mandatory and its content cannot be edited or modified. The agreement must be signed by both parties (employer and student) before it is submitted to the section for signature and before the internship begins.

If a company is not willing to sign the *EPFL Internship Agreement* and suggests a different form of agreement, please contact the [IC Internship Coordinator](#).

## **Remote work**

The primary aim of the internship program is to immerse students in the professional world. Consequently, remote work is neither recommended nor desired by EPFL and IC.

Exceptions may be considered, allowing for a limited amount of remote work, not exceeding 40%, at the company's request. Justification is required and the section reserves the right not to allow it if it is not consistent with the school's educational objectives.

In all cases, it is imperative that the company ensures that remote work does not compromise the student's overall internship experience and that it continues to add value to their professional development. Adequate supervision and a suitable remote work environment must be provided to maintain the quality of the internship.

It is prohibited to work for a company abroad from Switzerland.

## Salary

The Swiss authorities recommend a monthly salary in the range of CHF 2,000.-. This amount is the lower limit for the delivery of a work authorization by the Employment Service (Vaud) for all foreign students (excluding European Union). Nonetheless, salaries vary widely depending upon the employer, the size of the company and the sector. EPFL position is that internships should be remunerated.

Master's projects in industry, unlike internships, do not necessarily need to be paid, as they are considered as an academic task carried out under the supervision of EPFL.

## Work authorization

In accordance with Art. 39 OASA, foreign students who are enrolled at EPFL with a valid residence permit may complete a paid full-time internship, provided that the internship is a mandatory part of their studies. However, they must obtain authorization from the labor market authority.

- For students from third countries (non-UE/AELE), the company must apply to the relevant labor market authority for permission to employ the student as an intern and submit the working conditions to this authority. EPFL will issue an attestation stating that the internship is a mandatory part of the student's studies and that the student will remain enrolled as an EPFL student during the internship. Authorization is granted if the working conditions are valid. The company and the student must wait for the positive decision of the authorities of labor market authority before starting the internship.
- Students who are EU and EFTA citizens are granted the principle of mobility and the opportunity to work for the duration of the internship. However, the internship must be announced to the "*contrôle des habitants*" of the student's town or the canton in which the internship will take place. The internship can begin as soon as the announcement is made.

Master projects in a company do not require a working authorization since they are done under the supervision of an EPFL academic advisor.

For further information, please contact the relevant cantonal authorities.

## Evaluation

### ➤ Short or Long internships

Two weeks before the end of the internship, the internship supervisor will receive a link to an online evaluation form. The information provided by the company will be used by the section to determine the success or failure of the internship.

The student will also receive an evaluation form about the company and their self-assessment of the skills and knowledge gained during the internship.

### ➤ Master's project in industry

Master's projects are assessed on the basis of a written report and an oral defense in front of a jury<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to the [Master's project regulations](#) for more information.

## Confidentiality and intellectual property

### ➤ Internships

The student agrees not to disclose to third parties any proprietary data or information obtained during the internship without the prior consent of the company. The student also agrees to assign to the Company all intellectual property rights in the results and/or inventions (patentable or not) of the internship, including copyright in software created or modified by the student.

### ➤ Master's project in industry

Confidentiality is an exception in academia, which by its nature must publish its results. Since the Master's project is an academic assignment, it should not produce confidential results.

The results of a Master's project are not confidential and can be freely used by EPFL, the company and the student if no patent has been filed (or if delivery of the patent has been reused) and the results are not software.

Most faculty members in IC will not sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with a company for a Master's project. If an NDA is required, the EPFL academic supervisor can use the EPFL Agreement for Master's project (optional and the supervisor has the right to refuse signing this document).

The *EPFL Agreement for Master's project* specifies the exact scope of confidentiality, which cannot comprehensively cover the entire project. It also clearly outlines the claim to intellectual property rights and limits the period within which the company can patent the project results.

Unlike the *EPFL Internship Agreement*, this document is not accessible to students, staff, and companies, as only professors are authorized to use it and thus take responsibility for EPFL's engagement in a research context.

## Registration procedure with the section (internship or Master's project)

Students are responsible for finding their own internship. However, the section will help in this process by giving access to the EPFL internship portal, which contains a large number of proposals each semester. The section is under no circumstances responsible for finding an internship for the student.

The section has a database of more than 3,000 contacts in companies around the world. Each semester, internship proposals are available to students through this database.

Should a student find an internship or a Master's project without using the portal, they must validate the content of internship by sending an email to the [IC Internship Coordinator](#).

### ➤ Short or long internships

- Complete and sign (student and company) the [EPFL Internship Agreement](#) and submit it to the internship office before the start of the internship.

**➤ Master's project in industry or at another university<sup>3</sup>**

- Submit the description of the Master's project to the internship's office by completing the "[Validation of the Topic](#)" form.
- Once the topic has been validated by the section, the student may contact an IC accredited faculty member to supervise the project.
- Once an IC accredited faculty member has accepted to supervise the project, the student should complete the second part of the form, "[Registration](#)", and submit it to the internship office before the deadline.

An information session is organized at the beginning of each semester to provide students with all necessary information about deadlines and registration details.

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<sup>3</sup> It is only possible to carry out a Master project at another university if the mandatory internship (short or long) has been validated beforehand.