

EECS Phd Internships Unveiled: Experiences and Suggestions

Zhengqi Gao

MIT EECS

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I have undertaken several internships thus far, spanning from being an engineering intern at Baidu during my undergraduate years, a research intern at Shanghai Qizhi Institute during my master's studies, to a research intern at Nvidia while pursuing my PhD. These three distinct internships have provided me with invaluable insights into **the types of internships that a PhD student should consider pursuing**. My primary intention is to share this knowledge to the readers, with a special focus on junior PhD students who are currently in the process of seeking internships.

Firstly, identifies the purpose of your internship. In simpler terms, what factors hold the utmost significance in shaping your decision to accept or decline an internship offer? This consideration might revolve around diverse objectives, such as making money (I understand that a PhD stipend may sometimes fall short, and internships can be an avenue for financial accumulation), engaging in a research project leading to paper publication, establishing connections with industry, among others. You could even take in the location of the internship as a factor as well! In an ideal scenario, an internship encompassing all of these aspirations can be unearthed. However, reality often dictates that not all goals can be simultaneously fulfilled. This necessitates a careful deliberation to compare different internship offers and do a trade-off. I also recommend to be clear on your internship goals in advance, so it is easier to have target companies.

Secondly, understand the pivotal roles of your mentor, manager, and intern group. Building on the previous point, I wish to underscore the significant impact of your mentor, manager, and intern group (in order of importance). Your mentor, with whom you engage in daily communication, wields the most influence over your internship experience. It's highly advisable, if feasible, to grasp your mentor's work style and mentoring abilities as early as possible (even before accepting the offer). Inadequate mentoring skills (e.g., vague plans, lack of innovative ability) on their part can lead to an unpleasant experience for you. The other interns are usually your peers and can add a variety of activities to your spare time, making your internship more enjoyable. Moreover, a collaborative, diverse, and motivated intern group can foster an environment of knowledge sharing, teamwork, and inspiration.

Thirdly, tailor your schedule based on your internship workload. Ideally, your internship and university work would align (possible if your university supervisor collaborates with your internship manager), allowing you to focus on a single task instead of two parallel tasks. However, this is frequently not the case. As a PhD student, wholly setting aside university commitments during an internship isn't feasible. For example, you might have submitted a paper before your internship and received reviewer comments during it, requiring you to address revisions within a week. Internship demands can consume the entire day, leaving university work for the evenings. I personally much value a work-life balance, including activities like gym or basketball, which can conflict with night commitments. At this juncture, prioritization becomes essential. My approach involves dedicating m hours (e.g., $m = 1$) each weekday to university projects in the morning before transitioning to internship tasks. Depending on the university project's workload, I might devote additional time on weekends, typically only on Saturdays. The value of m should be adjusted from time to time according to the importance of your internship task and university task.

Other things you might want to consider are: (i) If you have a strong preference for what you want to work on, bring it up with your mentor and manager as early as possible; it is hard to shift to a new project in the middle of an internship, (ii) Do you want to continue working on the project after returning to the university?

Finally, I want to mention that if your internship really doesn't suit you, just prioritize and focus on your own work. I hope this article proves valuable to you in navigating the process of selecting internships. In conclusion, I would like to provide a link to a [website](#) containing accurate salary information for internships across various companies. Best of luck in your internship search and application process.