
WHO's internship programme: update

Report by the Secretariat

BACKGROUND

1. WHO's internship programme has existed since 1966. It provides opportunities for talented students to gain professional experience within the WHO working environment, while at the same time WHO benefits from their skills and up-to-date academic knowledge and increases its outreach throughout the world. In general, the work and performance of interns are very much appreciated by WHO colleagues.

2. In 2014, WHO provided internship opportunities to 946 students worldwide: 16 at the Regional Office for Africa; 163 at the Regional Office for the Americas; 21 at the Regional Office for South-East Asia; 136 at the Regional Office for Europe; five at the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 88 at the Regional Office for the Western Pacific; and 517 at headquarters.

DIVERSITY

3. WHO recognizes the contribution that students from developing countries make to the future of public health. In recent years, an increasing number of opportunities for internships have been provided at the regional and country levels, allowing more nationals from developing countries to participate in the programme.

4. In 2014, 77 different nationalities were represented in the internship programme worldwide (of which 66 were represented at headquarters). Over the last five years, women have accounted for 75% of the overall intern population and interns from developing countries have accounted for around 20%.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR INTERNS

5. The internship programme was established in line with the broad understanding of the United Nations that internships are unpaid.¹

¹ Under Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2014/1 of the United Nations Secretariat, section 7 on remuneration, expenses, medical benefits and loss or damage to personal effects, interns are not financially remunerated by the United Nations, and costs related to their travel, visas, accommodation and living expenses are the responsibility of interns or their sponsoring institutions.

6. WHO, like many other United Nations organizations and programmes (including the International Trade Centre, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNRWA and WMO), does not provide financial support to interns. However, 45% of internships take place in the regional offices, where the cost of living is usually lower than at headquarters in Geneva. Furthermore, 30% of interns receive funding through scholarships, which enables them to cover their own living expenses during their internship. There are, however, some United Nations and other organizations and programmes (such as IFAD, ILO, ITU, the United Nations Office for Project Services, WFP, WIPO and WTO) that provide financial support to all or some of their interns.

7. In order to support diversity in the internship programme, WHO has referred and will continue to refer prospective interns to lists of scholarships that are available for international internships.

ACTION BY THE PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

8. The Committee is invited to note the report.

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