

The Nurse Externship Resource Guide

Information provided by:

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THE NURSE EXTERNSHIP RESOURCE GUIDE

What is a Nurse Extern?

Many nursing students at Thomas Jefferson University enhance their experience with Externships. Similar to an internship, a Nurse Extern is exposed to a hospital setting on a variety of healthcare departments. Externships usually are offered in a formal program through each organization/hospital. Externships tend to consist of part time hours in the fall, spring and summer semesters. An extern position can vary from each hospital system and sometimes externships can be different between floors in a hospital. Contrary to popular belief, an externship does not guarantee you a job after graduation. An externship can, however, help you network with nursing professionals that may play an important role in your job search after successful completion and demonstrated professionalism on the floor.

Some of the job descriptions of a Nurse Extern include:

- Provide basic patient care; take and record vital signs to include temperature, pulse, respiration, weight, height, blood pressure and intake-output measurements
- Maintain a safe, comfortable, and therapeutic environment for patients/families in accordance with Hospital's standards
- Perform routine treatment procedures, to include invasive procedures such as blood draws, stage I and II wound care, and urinary catheterization; assist with specialty bed functions

How Do I Find Nurse Extern Positions?

Ask as many people as possible about externship opportunities, including instructors, faculty advisors, employers, classmates, and the staff of the Career Development Center. These contacts will likely give you advice and insight on externship opportunities and/or disclose their own experiences. Keep in mind that each person will have a different experience; no two externships are alike.

A thorough examination of your schedule should be evaluated before beginning the search. Will you have time to commit to the experience? Will working additional hours hinder your academic performance?

Many nurse extern positions are located directly on the organization's website. Some extern positions are posted quickly and taken down in a matter of days while others remain open for a period of time and offer a deadline for application. The availability of positions varies from year to year. *It is especially important to know that the majority of externships require the completion of a Medical/Surgical clinical rotation, in order to qualify.*

The fall and spring on-campus job fairs have provided students with the opportunity to meet with employers face to face. Many employers who are seeking professional candidates may also be advertising nurse externships or may direct you to a person who knows more information about externship opportunities. Job fairs provide students with a quick and convenient way to make a great lasting first impression or secure an interview after a student has applied. Do not underestimate the value of in-person communication. For more information about upcoming on-campus job fairs, please call the Career Development Center.

Below are some of the local hospitals/organizations with which students have obtained externships in the past.

Note: This is not an exclusive list of all externships

Aria Health Systems	Jefferson University Hospitals
Atlantic Health Systems	Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia	Lourdes Health System
Cooper University Hospital	Magee Rehabilitation
Fox Chase Cancer Center	MainLine Health
Geisinger Health Systems	Penn State Hershey

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If you are interested in externship opportunities or have questions about the process, contact a Career Counselor for assistance.

How Do I Apply for Nurse Extern Positions?

The externship search will give you practice for your professional job search because both processes are so similar. Like professional positions, externships require an application and an in-person interview.

Be sure to have your resume and application materials, such as a cover letter, critiqued by the Career Development Center. A well-written resume, free of errors is necessary to apply. The Career Development Center can assist you with your resume. It is important to remember that writing a resume takes time; please allow a couple of weeks to create the final draft of your resume. Planning ahead on your externship search will greatly benefit you.

Other services that could enhance your competitive edge are participating in a mock interview with a Career Counselor and attending Career Development Center workshops. Some that relate to your externship search are: Resume Writing, Interviewing Skills and How to Work A Career Fair. All workshop information is located on Symplicity, your online Career Management System. To register for an account, visit <https://jefferson-csm.symplicity.com>.

Preparing for an externship interview requires practice and critical thought; the Career Development Center is here to provide you with support and resources to help you look and act your best before, during and after your interview.

A Few Task Items and Thoughts for Your Consideration

- Identify if an externship is right for you; if you are unsure, discuss it with your faculty advisor or program director.
- Talk with a Career Counselor to help clarify your options and assist in your decision to pursue or not to pursue an externship. Other options remain to gain valuable experience, such as shadowing and volunteer work.
- Draft a resume. Give yourself time; typically a resume takes up to one week to be reviewed by a career counselor.
- Attend a workshop on resume writing, cover letters, and interviewing.
- Ask your professors and peers about externships.
- Directly contact hospital nurse recruiters if you are unclear about the application process. Because of the short-term nature of externships, some require an application that does not process through the main HR office.
- Finalize your resume and prepare for interviews before you are even selected for one. Take advantage of interviewing resources in the Career Development Center.
- Remain patient and positive in your search.
- Remind yourself that externships are an *optional* way to enhance your experience as a nursing student. The lack of an externship experience does not define your level of competency. Likewise, completing an externship will not guarantee you a nursing position.

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