 <p>Capilano Students' Union</p>	<b>Policy No.</b>	<b>Approval Authority</b>
	IS-13	Board of Directors
	<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>
	<b>Unpaid Practicums</b>	February 28, 2020
	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Scheduled Review</b>
	Campaigns and Advocacy Committee	October 2022

## Summary

While unpaid internships are illegal in British Columbia, many students still find the issue of unpaid work an unfortunate reality during their time pursuing education. Every year in Canada, there are an estimated three hundred thousand (300,000) unpaid internships that violate employment laws outright.<sup>1</sup> A further two hundred thousand (200,000) internships are unpaid, but considered legal, as “practicums,” for academic credit required in conjunction with a post-secondary program.<sup>2</sup> These unpaid internships do not violate the British Columbia Employment Standards Act, because it is assumed that students completing practicum work are receiving hands-on training in conjunction with their instructor’s guidance.<sup>3</sup>

Capilano University students in unpaid practicum programs however, have reported that there is a substantial lack of instructor support and guidance during their unpaid internships and have often been expected to complete work that should be done by permanent employees. Furthermore, Capilano University charges disproportionately high tuition fees for students in work experience courses, such as the North American Business Management Applied Post Baccalaureate Diploma (NABU Applied) program.<sup>4</sup>

To reduce the financial burden for students in unpaid practicum programs, Capilano University should move away from placing students in unpaid internships where possible and decrease tuition fees by at least fifty-percent (50%) to better reflect the actual instructor contact time and support given. All students deserve to be paid for their work, and should not be further punished by having to pay high tuition fees for the privilege to perform that work. Students already face significant struggles with the high costs of living in the lower mainland; high tuition fees and unpaid work only add to their struggles and prevent students from receiving a fair chance for success.

## Definitions

In this policy:

**“internship”** means on-the-job training offered by an employer to provide a person with practical experience. Completing an internship does not itself result in an academic certificate or diploma. If the duties performed by interns fall within the BC Employment Standards Act definition of “work”, the intern falls within the definition of “employee”, the agency using the services of an intern falls within the definition of “employer”, and internships will be considered “work”, and interns must be compensated accordingly.


<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Intern Rights Guide*, prepared by the Canadian Intern Association (Toronto, ON, 2014), 8, accessed online: [http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide\\_FINAL\\_Digital.pdf](http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide_FINAL_Digital.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *BC Employment Standards Act & Regulation Definitions*, prepared by the Government of British Columbia (Victoria, BC, 1997), accessed online:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/forms-resources/igm/definitions?keyword=internship>.

<sup>4</sup> Capilano University. “Tuition & Fee Estimator.” capilanou.ca. <https://www.capilanou.ca/admissions/fees-finances/tuition-fees/tuition-fee-estimator/> (accessed January 10, 2020).

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“**practicum**” means a part of a formal education process for students enrolled in a public or private post-secondary institution that involves the supervised practical application of previous classroom-taught theory related to course study. A practicum is “hands-on” training that is required by the curriculum, and will result in a certificate or diploma.

“**work**” means the labour or services an employee performs for an employer whether in the employee's residence or elsewhere.

## Rationale


The Capilano Students’ Union has adopted these policy principles because:

- There are five hundred thousand (500,000) unpaid internships that take place in Canada each year, with sixty percent (60%) violating employment standards and the remaining being considered unpaid practicums for academic credit required in conjunction with a post-secondary program;<sup>5</sup>
- The BC Employment Standards Act stipulates that a practicum must “involve the supervised practical application of previously classroom taught theory related to course study,” and is “hands-on” training that is required by the curriculum”; however,
- Capilano University students in practicum courses have reported a substantial lack of instructor support and guidance as well as a lack of hands-on, on-the-job training;
- Post-secondary institutions have authority over unpaid academic practicums in BC, resulting in a lack of oversight in instructor performance expectations and enforcement of employment standards;<sup>6</sup>
- Some practicum students, including many placed with for-profit companies, perform work that would otherwise be done by permanent employees, thus contributing to the organization’s profits and productivity, violating the BC Employment Standards Act definition of “practicum”;<sup>7</sup>
- Capilano University students in some practicum-required programs must pay full tuition fees for the entire semester spent working in a full-time unpaid practicum;
- Many Capilano University students rely on part-time employment outside of school to offset the high cost of living in the Lower Mainland. Being expected to work a full time, unpaid practicum

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Intern Rights Guide, prepared by the Canadian Intern Association (Toronto, ON, 2014), 8, accessed online: [http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide\\_FINAL\\_Digital.pdf](http://www.scsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CanadianInternRightsGuide_FINAL_Digital.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Attfield, James and Isabelle Couture. An Investigation into the Status and Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario. Victoria, BC: School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, 2015, 8. Accessed January 10, 2020. [http://internassociation.ca/tempcia/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Attfield\\_James\\_and\\_Couture\\_Isabelle\\_MPA\\_2014.pdf](http://internassociation.ca/tempcia/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Attfield_James_and_Couture_Isabelle_MPA_2014.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> BC Employment Standards Act, prepared by the Government of British Columbia (Victoria, BC, 1997), Definitions, 1, 1, accessed online: [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96113\\_01#section1](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96113_01#section1)

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does not give students the ability to do so, which can create barriers for low-income students to pursue opportunities for successful careers;<sup>8</sup>

- International students make up the majority of students in the NABU Applied Program, and on top of disproportionately high tuition fees they are limited to working only 20 hours per week, adding further financial stress.

## Policy Principles

1. The Capilano Students' Union supports initiatives that encourage:
  - a. the complete eradication of illegal unpaid internships in British Columbia, including practicums and work experience;
  - b. providing only paid internship and practicum options to students completing work experience courses required for program completion;
  - c. oversight and investigation by university administration to ensure the actual amount of instructor contact time is proportionate to the tuition and fees charged;
  - d. reducing or eliminating tuition and fees for courses that require students to spend the majority of their class time working an unpaid internship or practicum.
2. The Capilano Students' Union opposes initiatives involving:
  - a. the continuation of unpaid internships and practicums for students completing work experience courses required for program completion;
  - b. charging disproportionate tuition fees for courses that require students to spend the majority of their class time working at an internship or practicum.

<sup>8</sup> Attfield & Couture. Implications of Unpaid Internships in Ontario. 8.