Guidelines and Resources for Virtual Internships

A virtual internship is a work experience program where the participant (intern) gains experience while working in a remote professional setting and is not physically present at the job location.

The following guidelines pertain to virtual internship positions, and should be used in conjunction with the student's Internship Experience form on Handshake (if student is completing the internship for academic credit):

1. **Defined Learning Goals**. Prior to the internship, students must identify learning goals to be completed during the course of the internship. They could incorporate desired industry-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful career advancement. Supervisors will work with the intern at the beginning of the internship to develop a plan to ensure that the established goals are met, and check in regularly throughout the internship to see if the intern is on track to meet these goals.

2. **Thorough onboarding and orientation**. In order for the intern to get oriented and established in their new working environment, supervisors should plan for the intern's first day on the job to be focused on orientation and training. Consider a Zoom (or similar a synchronous meeting platform) to facilitate the following: meeting other staff members, learning about the organization, reviewing organization-wide-communication standards and workplace expectations (including taking required legal breaks, lunches, and system of tracking hours), and reviewing the student's defined learning goals. In addition provide electronic written documentation of the orientation and guidelines. This will provide the intern the chance to ask clarifying questions, as this might be their first professional work environment, and is likely their first virtually-based position.

3. **Timely Feedback**. Similar to online learning environments, supervisors should review intern deliverables and provide timely feedback to students on a regular basis. Supervisors are asked to schedule feedback meetings for a minimum of thirty minutes each week to engage in direct mentorship with the student regarding their progress towards learning outcomes and areas of professional development. Pre-planned training topics should also be discussed during these sessions. Synchronous meeting platforms should be used for this portion of the internship, including video conferencing or telephone, not email or messaging platforms.

4. **Consistent Communication**. Summative feedback should be provided consistently at least once per week. This includes an update on expected work activities for the week, outcomes from prior work submissions, and other relevant announcements pertaining to the organization. A good practice is to schedule a regular email report around or on the same day each week.

5. **Pre-arranged Schedules**. Although a key feature of remote internships is the flexibility of the work schedule, supervisors and interns should agree upon a definitive time allotment per week and per day for internship activities. Shift caps – defining the amount of accrued time allotted for any given task - are strongly recommended to avoid unreasonable work demands on the student and any conflict with reported internship hours. If a defined work schedule and/or shift cap is not established, disputes may result as to how long tasks took the student to perform. Students may have unrealistic expectations of time on tasks because this may be new to them.

6. **Organizational Involvement**. In addition to facilitating a remote or virtual internship, site supervisors should make a good faith effort to integrate the intern into the organization's work culture. After initial

onboarding orientation, this may include client visits and attendance at select team meetings, use of company tools and resources, and any other forms of access to other staff members.

7. **Reimbursement of Expenses**. Students engaged in virtual internships should not incur any personal expenses as a result of the internships "remote" status. Any such costs, including the purchase of software and hardware for the purposes of the internship, should be covered by the internship host site, or alternative arrangements provided to the student prior to starting the internship.

8. **Contextualize work**. Student interns benefit from tasks being contextualized. Rather than just assigning "to do" deliverables, communicate why the work is important. What is it contributing towards or connected to? How will this task contribute to the greater good of the project/department/organization?

9. **Beginners**. This may be the first time your intern has worked in an independent work environment which necessitates such high levels of self-motivation and personal organizational skills. The more support and tools you equip them with in this new environment, the more easily they will adapt.

Resources on Virtual internships

How Leading Employers are Adapting Their Internship Programs in this Covid-19 World
CollegeRecruiter employees have worked remotely since 1997, so they have some pretty good information to share in these short videos.

Elements of a Successful Virtual Internship

Developing an Amazing Virtual Internship Experience

Virtual Internships 101: Success Strategies for Supervisors on Friday, April 17th at 11:30am CT.

Virtual Internship Guidelines for Employers

12 Steps to Setting Up an Internship Program - Intern Program Tips - CheggInternships has a lot of resources for Employers at Internships.com

Remote Time Trackers

https://biz30.timedoctor.com/remote-employee-software/

TrackingTime   - Google Chrome

Project Management Tools

Monday.com, ASANA, Celoxis, Zoho Projects