REMOTE INTERNSHIP GUIDE

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Introduction:
Virtual internships are internships that require an intern (either working as a volunteer or temporary employee) to work in a location outside the traditional office setting, usually in or close to home. Due to circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic, organizations will have few, if any, in-person opportunities to engage interns and will instead have to turn to online options, such as using cloud-based programs, conferencing platforms, phone and email to conduct internships.

The following recommendations refer to virtual internship positions:

**Start with asking within the organization:**

* How can an online/remote intern best achieve goals for themselves and the organization?
* Do we have appropriate levels of staffing to properly supervise online interns?
* Does the organization have appropriate technology (hardware and/or software), access to WiFi, etc.?
* Can the organization provide meaningful projects for an intern who is working 100% remote?
* Can we provide an online internship experience that is meaningful to the intern and beneficial to the organization?

**Communication Do’s:**

* During the interview and selection phase, affirm that a virtual internship will qualify as meeting the requirements of the intern. Ensure that meetings with the college or university can be conducted remotely.
* Clearly communicate the tasks the intern is responsible for completing and their role at the organization.
* Provide comprehensive onboarding and orientation that includes an overview of the organization, an opportunity to meet members of the staff, and a review of workplace expectations and communication standards, including training on online platforms that will be used during the internship.
* Make sure the intern can easily connect with their supervisor or intern coordinator.
* Create a system that allows for quick responses to questions/concerns of the employer and the intern. Schedule check-in sessions with the intern throughout the week, at regular intervals and consider check ins that are several a day during the first few weeks, so the intern is well supported in their new role.
* After the intern settles into a routine, schedule weekly check ins of at least 30-minutes. Interns and supervisors can use this time to provide feedback, review deliverables, and ask questions.
* Create a weekly list of activities with expected outcomes to help shape expectations for the work week.

**Overall Benefits of Remote Internships:**

* Online or remote internships provide students the flexibility of working from home while gaining work experience. Interns also can use contacts made at virtual internships to further their interests/hopes for future employment or to act as references.
* Organizations benefit from advancing their work with the help of additional volunteers and/or staff, even when the physical office is closed.

**Sources:**

* <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/blog/post/best-practices-for-creating-a-successful-virtual-internship>
* <https://yello.co/blog/5-best-practices-for-a-successful-internship-program/>
* <https://www.up.edu/career/files/virtual-internships-guidelines-for-employers.pdf>