Developing & Supporting Virtual Internships

As companies increasingly shift to remote operations, the desire and necessity to host internships virtually also expands. Remote internships can be just as effective and rewarding as on-site internships for both employers and interns.

This guide will help your company ensure that:

- Your virtual internship is compliant with the UCLA Career Center’s internship approval policies.
- You have the information and resources necessary to design and host a high-quality and effective remote internship experience.

Your Remote Internship + UCLA

Make sure your internship meets UCLA’s guidelines, paying specific attention to our Virtual Internships Policy.

- [UCLA Internship Agreement]

UCLA students may not be able to receive academic credit for your remote internship

- UCLA students are free to participate in paid or unpaid internships for credit or no credit.
- UCLA’s Center for Community Learning or individual academic departments determine credit eligibility on a case-by-case basis, and students must initiate this process.
- [UCLA Center for Community Learning internship course credit information]

Pay Your Remote Interns

- Wages provide compensation for the effort put forth in an internship, whereas academic credit (if eligible) provides compensation for the completion of UCLA internship course assignments demonstrating the learning that takes place in an internship. Students pay tuition for internship credits.

Be Ready to Recruit & Host Remote Interns

Assess Your Recruitment Timeline & Internship Duration

- Duration: Determine the best internship duration and weekly hours expectations for your company. Shorter, project-based internships are something to consider.
- Consult with your UCLA Career Center contact for specific advice and best practices regarding UCLA students:
  - Chris Howell, Industry Relations Manager, International & Experiential Opportunities
  - Alexis Rampaul, Internships & Talent Development Manager
- [Request a consultation here: Successful Recruiting @ UCLA]

Use Collaboration Technology Tools

- Determine which collaboration technology your company will utilize to work with interns. These can include Slack, Microsoft Teams, Trello, Asana, GroupMe, Zoom, Google Docs, etc.
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- Include the specific collaboration tools utilized by interns within your position description.
- Ensure each intern has the ability to access everything they need to be successful working remotely for your company (computer, collaboration software, cloud drives, etc.).

Onboarding & Training
- Assess your onboarding and training processes for how to best provide them virtually.
- Frontload logistics and communicate your processes early on to alleviate intern anxiety.
- Training: Variety is key. Leverage what you already have. Try to have a mixture of on-demand videos and reading materials combined with real-time delivery.

Intern Work Plan

Define the Scope, Schedule, and Deliverables
- Define the scope of the work interns will be doing.
- Set specific goals and expectations for the intern’s work schedule and project deliverables.
- Cut or transform the aspects of your on-site program that do not work well virtually, and build up the tasks and projects that fit better with remote work.

Track Intern Progress on Tasks & Projects
- Determine the best method for interns to provide regular progress updates.
- This can look like a daily email or Slack message, updates on Trello/Asana, video check-ins, etc.

Provide Meaningful Work Assignments to Interns
- Interns must have the ability to work on actual company tasks and projects.

Supervision, Professional Development & Networking

Prioritize Consistent & Frequent Communication
- Clarify the best way for interns to communicate with their direct supervisor and frequent collaborators.
- Schedule regular check-ins by phone or video to answer questions, share updates, provide feedback, etc.

Networking: Integrate & Introduce Interns
- Networking with company employees is an incredibly valuable aspect of any internship.
- Facilitate opportunities for interns to meet and network with company employees in both professional and social settings.
- You can schedule and invite interns to company panel events, 1:1 mentoring, chat groups, small group roundtables, virtual lunch gatherings and happy hours, etc.

Engage Interns in Optimizing Your Remote Internship Program and Practices
- Especially if going remote is new, focus more on asking interns what they want out of their internship with you, and do your best to give that to them.
- Both companies and interns can benefit if you invite and collect feedback from interns on their remote internship experience with you.
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Selected Online Resources

All About Virtual Internships:

- 8 Tips to Develop a Successful Virtual Internship Program

- Handshake Employer Blogs: Creative Ways to Make Your Virtual Internship a Success

- Top Perks for Interns Can Be Adapted to a Virtual Workplace

- Parker Dewey Tips for Remote Internships

Selected Tools & Successful Virtual Internship Programs:

- Parker Dewey Remote Internship Project Templates

- Virtual Student Federal Service