

Villanova University Virtual Internship Guide

Purpose of Virtual Internship Guide

During this unprecedented time, you may be looking for guidance about how to transform an in-person internship into a virtual internship. This guide is designed to assist in the process of developing a virtual internship at your organization and seeks to answer frequently asked questions regarding virtual internships for Villanova University students. Based on insights from the Ivy Research Council's March 23-24, 2020, [survey of student reactions](#) to COVID-19, 89% of students pursuing a 2020 summer internship would prefer a virtual internship over a canceled one.

To provide the best opportunities to Villanova students and alumni, The University Career Center works with employers to create and maintain quality internship programs that meet the general internship qualifications at Villanova University.

Together, it is our goal that all internships, virtual and in-person, provide a mutually beneficial experience to students and alumni, as well as our employer partners.

Generally, the outlined criteria below must be met to qualify as a professional internship:

- The intern will receive quality training by a supervisor/mentor who possesses expertise directly related to the intern's responsibilities.
- The experience will provide exposure to multiple aspects of a professional career field, organization or industry.
- A job description will be provided that includes a detailed explanation of duties and/or projects, required skills or qualifications and a minimum number of hours per week.
- Clerical or nonprofessional tasks will comprise no more than 20% of the intern's responsibilities.
- The intern will be provided with the resources required to complete assignments.

To create a virtual internship program, in addition to meeting the criteria above, the suggestions that follow will provide the intern with an experience that will support their academic requirements, allow for learning and build their professional experience.

Set Goals for The Virtual Internship

- Develop a virtual internship program** that meets the need of your organization and the learning requirements of the intern.
- Set clear expectations** at the onset of developing the learning contract so that both parties understand the projects that will be completed and the learning that will occur. Additionally, expectations should also be inclusive of the virtual learning environment. Things to consider:
 - What is the schedule of the internship and what happens if the intern is in a different time zone?
 - What types of communication will be used (phone, Zoom, Slack, etc.)?
 - How does an intern maintain or document their hours?
 - What is the outcome that the employer needs to achieve?
 - What are the specific learning outcomes of the intern and how will they measure success?

Virtually Recruit, Interview & Hire

- Use Handshake to recruit for your internship.** Choose Villanova as a university contact when creating your organization's Handshake account and you will have access to recruit over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and over 24,000 alumni with current Handshake accounts.

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- Host virtual interviews.** This will provide the intern with an idea of what a virtual experience will encompass. During the interview, it is important to share the expectations of the internship responsibilities and the requirements of the virtual experience.
- Organize important hiring documentation.** It is important to provide a plan that will support any barrier that would slow down the hiring process. Communicate with human resources about the location of the intern and adhere to state employment regulations for tax purposes. Next, create a document for the intern that outlines the expectations of the intern, the paperwork that is required and how to deliver the information to human resources. You may consider having the manager email them a note welcoming them to the team.

Host Onboarding & Training Online

- Begin to onboard your intern** 4-8 weeks before the beginning of the internship. Onboarding an intern for their virtual internship will be a different experience than onboarding for an in-person internship.
- Conduct an audit of what technology** the intern will need to be successful in the internship. You may consider providing a stipend for WiFi and/or startup costs. It should be expected that the intern would not provide any or all of the following:
 - Computer (desktop, laptop, webcam, tablet, phone, etc.)
 - Software or access to specific platforms and apps that require a license
 - Security software
 - Project management software (Airtable, Microsoft Teams, Asana)
- Consider mailing out the technology** a week before the internship starts. Connect the intern with your IT department and then schedule time with them to ensure that their internet works and answer any other questions that they may have.
- Connect them with their peers.** To establish a connection early on, both to the organization and the team, create a buddy system and introduce interns to each other. This will allow them to ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking others.
- Set up virtual meetings with team members.** Work with existing team members so that they understand the purpose of the intern and why they are being brought onto the team. Also, during those meetings, set the expectation that the intern would schedule time with the team members regularly to meet with them and discuss any projects.
- Engage your interns creatively.** Invite them to virtual coffee chats and water cooler chats to learn more about their teams.
- Facilitate training in an online format** and deliver it in a manner that allows the intern to engage and ask follow-up questions if needed. It needs to be inclusive of training of the intern's responsibilities, expectations and any technology or software.
- Make the implicit, explicit.** Evaluate what is considered workplace norms that the intern will need to know to be successful in the culture of your workplace. For instance, is it a workplace norm to turn your camera on during a meeting?

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Supervise & Mentor

- Train managers.** Consistency is important across your organization's internship program. Ask managers to set expectations about blocking out time for lunch, activities and assignments on the intern's calendar.
- Provide oversight and mentorship** of the virtual internship experience for the intern. This includes ensuring that the intern is achieving their objectives that are laid out in their learning contract. Things to consider include:
 - Regular, consistent one-on-one meetings; agenda should be focused on what has been going well for the intern, what is needed, what has been achieved and constructive feedback.
 - Access to supervisor for impromptu and immediate questions that need to be addressed to continue their work.

Focus on Online Professional Development

- Facilitate networking opportunities** that allow the interns to meet one another and host informational interviews with staff members.
- Provide online access** to organization-specific professional development courses or training. If your organization does not offer professional development courses online, there are online professional development tools that could be suggested (i.e. LinkedIn Learning).
- Invite them to join Employee Resource Groups** to encourage the exploration of the workplace culture.

After the Internship

- Complete a final evaluation** and facilitate a formalized exit interview process. This allows interns to provide feedback to assess the effectiveness of the program and provides you an opportunity to make changes that will enhance the experience for future interns.
- Leverage your HR team** to share tips about how to demonstrate their skills and talk about their experience on their resumes, and in interviews.
- Be a reference** for the intern, provide contact information that they can include on future applications.
- Connect with them** on LinkedIn for additional professional networking opportunities. Encourage them to post a review of your company and their internship experience on Handshake.
- Provide copies or files** that link the projects they worked on so that they continue to build their work portfolio.

Helpful Links

- [FLSA Standards](#)
- [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#)
- [Ivy Research Council's Virtual Internship Tips](#)
- [The ADA and Internships](#)
- [Reasonable Accommodations in Internship Sites](#)
- [#HireNova](#)
- [Handshake](#)