

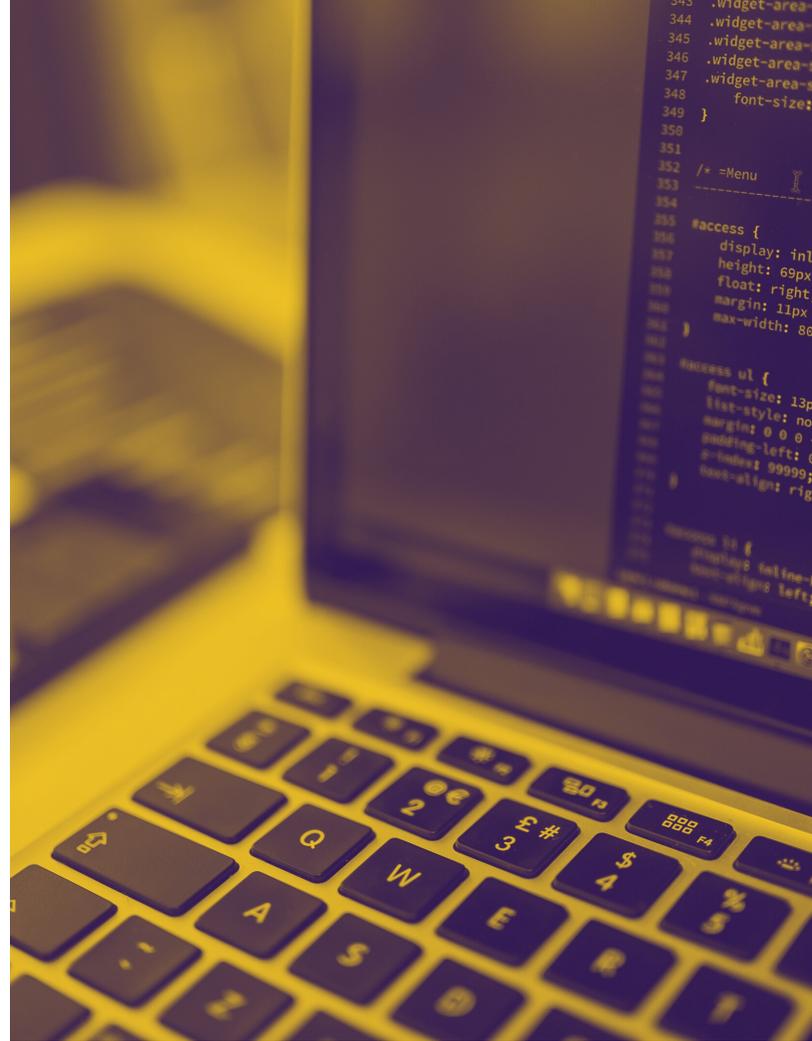
# Virtual Internships

## Best Practices for Employers

Offering remote or virtual internship opportunities can be an attractive option for employers who want to broaden their access to talent without the limitations of geography or space.

However, it can also be an option that can be intimidating to undertake or executed poorly due to an employer's lack of experience with such internships.

In an effort to help employers create a mutually successful virtual experience for the student and the employer, we have put together a list of best practices for planning and implementing virtual internships.



### First, Technology:

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**Implicit in offering a virtual opportunity is the need to use available technology to implement its modality. It will be important to:**

- **Determine your level of access to the tech tools and platforms necessary to provide your intern that they can successfully complete their responsibilities.**
- **Research virtual meeting platforms, messaging and scheduling software, systems for sharing files and folders, and project management tools. Many of these technologies can be used at little to no cost.**

## Virtual Doesn't Mean Impersonal:

**Though you may never meet the intern in-person, the experience for the intern should not be impersonal. It will be important to:**

- Onboard your intern. Even though they may never step foot in your physical space, the intern is still a part of your team and will need to know what it is to be a part of your team. Create a virtual training or orientation that shares the company goals, mission, and vision. Introduce them through email or connect them through LinkedIn or similar platforms to those they will be working with to accomplish assignments. Share with them all necessary training documents for their role. If possible, create a virtual mentoring program they can participate in with other professionals at your company.
- Learn what the intern's goals are for the internship, e.g. what skills and competencies they are hoping to gain from the experience, and make efforts to help them achieve these goals. Where possible, provide training and resources to support their achievement of these goals. And if they are unsure of their goals, collaborate with them to develop 3 – 5 goals for the internship.
- Meet with your intern regularly and provide valuable, personalized feedback that is specific to their responsibilities and their stated goals for the experience.

## Clear Structure and Guidelines:

**When you remove physical proximity from an experience, you lose the ability to spontaneously drop in to check on your intern's progress or provide instant clarity regarding their responsibilities. It will be important to:**

- Set an agreed upon schedule with interns keeping in mind that unpaid internships range from 6 – 10 hours a week and paid internships up to 20 hours a week.
- Supervisors and interns should agree upon a definitive time allotment per week, per day, and per internship activity. Identify a specific project that matches your intern's background and qualifications and is feasible within the timeframe of the internship. Put the project in writing, including a description of what success will look like, the resources they need to complete it, and a tentative week-by-week timeline they should follow.
- Schedule a 30-60 minute check-in every week to help ensure the intern doesn't lose focus and subsequently let their project go astray. Clear project scope will help alleviate frustration on both sides and keep everyone on track.



### In light of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Many employers have had to consider offering virtual internships as a safe alternative to their previously in person experiences. In addition to the best practices listed in this guide, it is important during such a time of disruption and uncertainty to remain **transparent**, **empathetic**, and **honest** when communicating with your student interns about plans to convert their in-person experiences to a virtual modality.