

Hints and Tips for Virtual Internships

Virtual internships are projects that can be undertaken by a student remotely from an office or a host supervisor. Sometimes this is required for practical reasons (lack of office space etc) or sometimes because it suits both parties for other reasons.

Virtual internships can largely be completed flexibly by the student and there is generally no requirement for day to day supervision, which allows the intern to get on with the project in hand and the supervisor to get on with their day to day work. It does, however, rely heavily on effective communication on both sides to ensure a successful outcome.

Internships brokered by York Internships are project based and can be undertaken by York students on a full or part time basis depending on the time of year and the requirements of the project.

For a project to be completed successfully on a virtual basis we would recommend considering the following points during the engagement process

Recruitment

Think about **skills and experience** that would be helpful to you to be able to work effectively in a remote way, not just the skills needed for the role itself. Examples could include communications skills - how do you anticipate you will communicate about the work; and time management - how will you ensure the work is completed to the required timelines you'll set out?

If all of the work is going to be completed virtually then also think about the **type of person** that you would be able to work and connect with for the duration of the project - you need to be able to develop and sustain a relationship that works for both parties for the project to be successful.

Consider the **physical resources** the role requires and if the desired project outcomes can be achieved in a virtual way - for example:

- Does the intern need access to files and other shared resources of the business in order to complete the project successfully?
- Could access to these be provided remotely for the duration of the internship?
- Will the intern need access to a laptop and if so can this be provided or is the intern expected to use their own or borrow one from the University?

Selection

It's probably best, if the internship is going to be completed in a virtual way that the **interview** is held that way too. It's also a good time to try out the platform you think you'll use for the duration of the project to keep in touch with the intern as the platform for the interview too. This could be Skype, Zoom or any other conferencing tool. **Video interviews** are commonplace in recruitment and selection processes amongst graduate employers so this would be a preferred way of conducting the internship interview. Alternatively you can consider a short **telephone interview** initially and then arrange a virtual meeting later.

Consider if the interviewee comes across as professional, eager and interested in the project. For an internship to be completed in a virtual way, the intern will need to be proactive and a self starter - how can you measure that in your selection process?

Induction

For any business, an induction is the best way to make a good first impression. If the induction is a structured and organised experience, then the intern will perceive the organisation in the same light. The traditional induction process might involve a welcome and a tour of the premises, meeting colleagues who might be involved in the internship, perhaps completing some forms and sharing information on goals and tasks associated with the project. A **virtual internship induction** can cover all of these things but over a virtual platform perhaps sharing resources where necessary over email in advance

York Internships also asks interns to complete an [online induction checklist](#) with you to ensure that all of the relevant points have been covered.

During the Internship

Ensure that the intern has the **required tools** to complete the project - how will they access any data or documents etc that they may need?

Agree a rough **schedule and working hours** for the project - will the intern work regular hours or is there flexibility for them to complete the necessary work when it's convenient for them - to fit around studies or other commitments?

Be clear on the **project priorities** so the intern can focus on the key parts of the project at the right time. Discussing these will help the intern to focus on the particular job in hand. By giving **precise instructions and timescales** there can be no doubt over what is required and by when.

Make sure that **clear lines of communication** are set from the beginning so you can be updated on the progress of priorities and tasks by the student and so you can also update the intern on events or changes that may impact the work they are doing. This could be an email at the end of the week and/or weekly chats at an agreed time over video call.

Providing regular **feedback** on the work completed or in progress will ensure the intern feels valued, a part of the team and will ensure the project is completed to a high standard.

Support for all internships, virtual or otherwise is available via York Internships. Contact us at careers-placements@york.ac.uk or on 01904 324240.