

Internship Guidelines during COVID-19

Official university guidance about internships notes that “health and safety concerns” are paramount. The university recommends that all internships occur remotely where possible. All UCI internships in the School of Social Sciences will be remote to abide by government orders to practice social distancing.

Why offer a remote or virtual internship?

Remote or virtual internships are those in which work is completed off-site. Communication may happen through email, online chat, or phone. During this “shelter at home” period, these opportunities offer a way for organizations to meet their short- and long-term business goals. In addition, students gain valuable workplace experience to develop their career competencies.

Tips for Successful Internship Placements

CONVERT AN IN-PERSON INTERNSHIP INTO A REMOTE EXPERIENCE

- Consider goals:
 - What is feasible in an online environment?
 - What needs do your agency have during these times of social distancing?
 - What of your in-person internship can be transferred to a remote internship?
 - What learning objectives does the placement offer?
 - What projects can be completed in a semester?
- What resources are needed (video conferencing apps, file sharing tools, project management systems)?
- Who will coach/supervise/mentor this intern?
 - Will one person provide the most continuity to a remote intern?
 - Should a team be engaged to offer advice/feedback on training or project work?

CONSIDER OFFERING PROJECT-BASED INTERNSHIP OR “MICRO” PROJECTS

If offering an internship with a full range of activities (e.g., multiple projects, team projects, weekly team meetings, engagement with clients online) is not possible during this time, consider clustering up your internship into projects or “micro-projects.” Consider identifying projects from your “wish list” that require concentration, writing, analysis, and review of databases. The key is to ensure a meaningful experience that cultivates a professional network and learning opportunity.

Examples include:

- Conducting market research
- Developing a social media marketing plan
- Generating newsletter or blog content
- Supporting virtual conference planning
- Developing communications with customers during COVID-19
- Editing episodes and producing social media content for a podcast series
- Developing educational training materials

Good Practices

- Consistent and Clear communication
- Weekly meetings with regular meeting times
- Outline Clear expectations
- An outline of all main projects and deadlines
- Pathways for consistent feedback (for both student and the supervisor)
- Embrace flexibility
- Create a stress-free working agreement
- Help with networking and connections at the agency to facilitate the interns’ transition and cohesion to the group
 - Create a buddy system with other interns
- Offer resources and trainings to onboard your interns
- Engage the intern in reflection and feedback opportunities
- Assist the intern in exploring and refining their professional identity and goals

CRITERIA FOR INTERNSHIPS

To ensure that an internship experience—whether traditional or remote/virtual—is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) definition, all the following criteria must be met:

1. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
2. The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
4. There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
5. There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
6. There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
7. There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

If these criteria are followed, it is the opinion of NACE that the experience can be considered a legitimate internship. Visit the [NACE website](#) for more information