

College of Charleston Virtual Internship Policy

If a virtual internship is offered by a prospective internship site, the following must be in place:

- I. The organization must be an established, legitimate business or non-profit, as evidenced by considerations such as a physical location, website, history of offering paid employment, listed telephone number, tax ID number, etc.
- II. The organization must agree to offer an internship that meets the criteria of a legitimate internship as outlined by NACE, the National Association of Colleges and Employers:
 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 related to the student's professional goals.
 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.
- III. The organization's internship site mentor must provide the student with regular supervision, mentoring, and feedback. In a virtual internship, this will include:
 - a. Use of a company intranet or virtual workspace on a server, or an online project management or document-sharing tool, such as Office 365, Google Docs, or a similar program. This will allow the supervisor to go online and monitor the work which is to be completed. The work is stored in the "cloud," not on a single PC, so it is always available to those who need it.
 - b. A weekly virtual meeting on Skype, GMail video chat or a similar technology. This meeting will be used to provide more personalized feedback to the student and correct any issues.

Best practices for employers considering delivering an online (virtual) internship Virtual internships, when properly delivered can be a rewarding experience for both the student and the employer. For companies and organizations that are considering hosting virtual internships for the summer of 2020, here are some suggestions:

- Allocate enough time before the start of the virtual internship to:
 - Select and test and the right software for managing work
 - Staff training to use the new software/systems (if students are expected to use new software or information technology, it should be provided free-of-charge)
 - Develop a work plan for the intern, training materials, activities and tools that the intern will need to be successful in the role
 - Clearly define expectations for both the intern and the supervisor/mentor. These need to be agreed upon before the start of the internship. Goals and expectations should be reinforced on a regular basis

- It is essential that all tasks and projects are carefully prepared and planned in order for the virtual intern will be able to manage the work effectively by themselves. The creation of a written workplan that covers the entirety of the experience is suggested.
- Because the intern will not have the opportunity to have the everyday interactions of the workplace, the materials, instructions and task descriptions need to be well prepared and available online so that they have access to that information when it is needed.
- For the supervisor, it is suggested that you engage the rest of your team in the delivery of the virtual internship experience. By doing this the intern will have the opportunity to interact with several individuals throughout the course of the experience. Team members need to be committed and available to engage with virtual interns on a daily basis (and sometimes multiple times a day).
- Create and deliver a well-balanced experience for your intern that includes the opportunity for the intern to:
 - Learn about your organization
 - Focus on professional development
 - Engage in meaningful projects and work that will help to develop their overall ability to become a valuable team member in the future

Resources for delivering a virtual internship experience:

- Face to Face Communication – GoToMeeting, Zoom, FaceTime, WebEx, Zoho Meetings, etc.
- Other communication tools – Slack, Email, Instant Messenger, etc.
- Free Project Management Tools – Asana, OpenProject, nTask, Monday, etc.
- Online file sharing – DropBox, Box, GoFile, etc

Resources for online internships and other forms of experiential learning:

There are several third-party companies and organizations that serve as brokers or “middle-men” between postsecondary institutions or students and employers. Here at College of Charleston we do not endorse any particular organization or service but want to share with the broader community these resources that students, colleges and advisors may not be aware of. In addition, colleges and universities should be aware that with the COVID-19 pandemic, more vendors are appearing to advocate for and support online internships.

Finally, if interacting with any of the resources and organizations below, postsecondary institutions should be consider whether there is a cost to the student, to the institution, and/or to the employer. Different vendors have different approaches, and precisely who pays for what and other financial constraints or arrangements should be closely and carefully scrutinized.

Besides offering ideas and opportunities for students, some of these organizations also may provide assistance to postsecondary institutions in migrating traditional internships to online platforms.

Third-party facilitators of online internships between employers and students

- Virtual Internships: <https://virtualinternships.com/>
- Parker Dewey: <https://www.parkerdewey.com/>

Organizations that provides faculty with ideas for course-based projects

- Riipen: <https://riipen.com/>
- Parker Dewey: <https://www.parkerdewey.com/>

Other resources on online internships

- Intern Bridge: <https://internbridge.com/>
- InternQube (resource guide for online internships): <https://www.internqube.com/articles.html>

Michael True, InternQube.com (modified by professional colleagues on the Internship-Net listserv).

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