

1. STEPS TO BE TAKEN BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP

Preparation for the internship is very important for its successful start and proceeding. Usually it takes 2 to 4 weeks from the time that organisation decides/agrees to receive the intern till the beginning of the internship. In this period, it is useful to take some steps that will help to make sure that an intern is well-prepared, focused and productive during their internship. Technological preparation is crucial for digital internship – it involves

agreeing on ICT technologies needed during the internship for communication and for performing the work tasks in an effective manner.

The main steps you should take before the internship:

- Receive information about the intern and internship program
- Have initial meeting with the intern

1.1. RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERN AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Information about the internship should be provided to you by the intern, higher education education (HEI) or your manager if he is the mediator between HEI and you.

Knowing about the study program of interns and the scope of internship objectives will help you to prepare for supervising. You also need information about the length of internship (most often, it is two or three months) and the number of hours that intern has to spend on carrying out internship tasks. It is helpful for you to make a decision on the amount of hours per week that you can devote to the intern and you will most likely need to devote more time to intern in the beginning of internship. Usually interns have a second supervisor from the higher education institution, and there is a possibility that he will contact you or at some point you will feel that you need to contact him.

Checklist of information you would need before the internship starts:

- intern's name and contact information
- the name of higher education institution, study program, level of study
- name and contact information of supervisor from the higher education institution the duration of internship and the number of internship hours; part-time or full-time
- internship
- the list of goals/objectives and tasks of the internship defined by HEI
- materials/documents of internship provided by HEI (assessment forms, regulations etc.)
- online communication platform that is available to intern for face-to-face meetings with you digital tools (programs) that are specific for the study field and business field, useful to carry
- out internship tasks and/or available to intern (e.g., architecture or design software)
- what time zone intern is in (in case of digital internship)

If there is any other information you want to know about the internship and expectations from you as a supervisor, do not hesitate to ask for it.

1.2. HAVE THE INITIAL MEETING WITH AN INTERN

Qualitative internship should be subject to an initial interview between the supervisor from the receiving organisation and the student.

Initial connection that the supervisor and intern make sets tone for the remainder of the relationship. It is an opportunity for detailed discussion of supervisor's and intern's expectations.

The initial meeting with an intern can take place online or in-person, but it is recommended to have face-to-face communication, and it should be de-

voted to getting to know each other, discussing the internship objectives, conditions of communication, and providing basic information about the organisation and work environment.

Topics to be discussed in the initial meeting with an intern:

- Objectives of internship
- Conditions of communication
- Introduction to organisation
- Work environment

Agree on the objectives of the internship.

An intentional focus on student learning is what distinguishes internships from jobs. Interns should be considered learners first and contributors second, regardless of whether they are earning credit associated with their internship. The success of the internship and its smooth proceeding depends on the joint understanding of internship objectives by the supervisor and by the intern. Clear objectives (optimally 3 – 5) of the internship (formal and personal) should be defined, discussed and written down before the internship starts.

In that case, the approach will be more creative and flexible from your perspective. Beside the formal objectives, it is worth asking the intern what his personal objectives for the internship are in terms of knowledge, skills and experience. You might ask an intern if there are any professionals in your organisation that he would specifically like to meet and learn from them.

Your involvement in co-creating learning objectives with interns is important since it:

- signals that you **care** about their experience, which can increase their commitment, productivity, and desire to stay long-term,
- helps ensure everybody is on the **same page**, resulting in a better experience for all,
- **models** professional goal-setting, action-planning, and accountability,
- helps set the stage for **maximum intern learning**.

Usually HEI provides the internship objectives in internship documentation, however, you and the intern can agree on other or additional objectives.

HOW TO CO-CREATE LEARNING OBJECTIVES WITH INTERNS: some tips

Learning objectives can focus on different areas:

- Skill development
- Knowledge acquisition
- Personal/professional development

SMART – effective learning objectives share some commonalities:

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable
- A – Action-oriented
- R – Relevant
- T – Time-oriented

Example of SMART learning objectives:

- By the middle of my internship, I will be able to write a 1-pg press release using AP style
- By July 30th, I will be able to troubleshoot Microsoft Excel questions with 97% accuracy
- By week 5, I will be able to identify 3 career paths in this field & 1 way to learn about each

Prompts for SMART learning objectives:

- What do you **specifically** hope to accomplish?
- How will you **measure** your progress towards this objective?
- What **actions** will you take to achieve this objective?
- How is this objective **relevant** to your internship, academic interests, &/or career aspirations?
- What is your **timeline** for meeting this objective?

Objective-setting caveats:

- Try to **avoid** broad objectives like “understand” or “learn” because they cannot be easily measured
- **Three** objectives is typically sufficient for a quarter-long internship
- Writing SMART objectives may require several feedback and revision loops

Objective-setting is a process:

- **Before the internship starts**, encourage intern to think of a few potential learning objectives and to flesh out their objectives in writing
- **When the internship starts**, review learning objectives in weekly or biweekly check-in sessions
- **After a few weeks**, ask your intern about how they are progressing towards their learning objectives, what action plan they have in place to achieve them, and how they might want to modify their original objectives
- At the **end of the internship**, review progress towards stated learning objectives as part of a formal performance evaluation meeting

Examples of specific learning objectives in digital internship:

- Acquire hands-on experience and demonstrate skills of working in a virtual team.
- Explore and recognize the different information acquisition styles and preferred information handling strategies of virtual team members.
- Use the diverse working styles and traits of virtual team members to successfully collaborate in virtual environments.
- Explore effective general learning strategies and those applicable specifically to virtual learning environments.
- Carry out self-directed learning and learning in an online environment.
- Recognize how various learning approaches and strategies have direct workplace application.

Agree on the conditions of communication during the internship.

Clear conditions of communications is critical for the success of internships and digital internships in particular. Before the internship you and intern should agree on these communication conditions:

1. Channels and frequency of regular face-to-face communication (for example, you might agree on meeting for 30 minutes every Monday at 1pm)

Create an ongoing schedule of regular face-to-face online communication (Teams, Zoom, Skype etc.) or in-person meetings if possible for both parties. Channels and frequency of regular communication may vary depending on objectives of the internship and scope of work tasks, however, it is recommended to schedule weekly meetings. Schedule of regular email communication can also be set.

Regular face-to-face meetings with the intern will be devoted to:

- assigning or updating work tasks,
- giving feedback on the intern's performance in the ongoing or finished work tasks,
- inquiring about the intern's adaptation and well-being,
- providing support and encouragement,
- answering the intern's questions etc.

2. Channels and conditions of communication outside the regular face-to-face meetings

Communication apart from scheduled or regular meetings will be needed if an intern has questions. Conditions of communication for these instances should include information about the most appropriate channels for intern to reach you outside the regular meetings and the terms under which you are able to engage (for example, you might agree that if sudden questions or issues arise, intern contacts you by e-mail and you will be able to reply in the next working day, or that he can contact you by phone and receive immediate reply).

Introduce intern to the organisation

Initial meeting is the time when you as a supervisor can introduce the intern to the main information about the organisation and provide him with resources where he could find out more about the organisation. These activities are called onboarding or orientation. Your support in getting to know other employees, especially those with whom he will be in closer collaboration during the internship, is important.

In general, it is recommended to give an insight to intern about:

- Products or services provided by organisation History, mission and objectives of organisation
- Structure of organisation (e.g., organisational chart)
- Employees or team with whom the intern will collaborate; if possible, introduce the

intern to his closest collaborators from the organisation (online or in-person)

- Resources where the intern can find out more about the organisation (for example, a particular section of the organisation's webpage)
- Photos or video about the organisation or work environment (office or production premises etc.), especially if initial meeting takes place online
- Next formal or informal team meeting in an organisation where an intern is invited to participate (of course, participation opportunities depend on the topics to be discussed in team meetings, data protection issues etc.)

Introduce intern to the main conditions of work

Provide the intern with information about documentation and unwritten rules of work environment, work regulations and logistical issues that he needs to know to integrate into the organisation and carry out work tasks. Of course, access to any internal documentation will be in accordance with the organisation's interests and data protection rules. You might need to consult your manager about the documentation that can be provided to intern before the internship.

Provide the intern with information about the digital programs and tools that he/she will need to carry out work assignments. Possibly, an intern needs to acquire knowledge about certain topics or IT programs before the internship to be successful, and you might suggest ways for it.

The organisation should decide what access intern will need to resources such as the intranet and company programs and systems. If possible, it is advisable to assign an IT team member to intern, someone who will be responsible for ensuring they have quick access to all the resources they need as soon as they start (for example, by establishing and sharing passwords in advance).

Checklist of information about work environment and logistical support:

- Regulations of work safety
- Data protection rules
- Code of ethics
- Any other internal documentation of organisation
- Security or confidentiality issues that the student should be aware of
- Schedule of working day and working hours
- Internal communication channels in organisation
- Communication etiquette for videoconferences, phone, email etc.
- Digital tools, programs and network used in organisation needed for intern to carry out work tasks

If the internship is traditional, i.e. in-person, it is advisable before the internship to set a workspace for the intern and to show him where it will be.

Informing an organisation's employees about the future intern by sending them email or in any other form is also a recommended option both in case of in-person or digital internship.

Keep email short and straightforward, introduce the intern with his name, educational background and the date when he/she will officially start the internship. If possible, explain to employees the provisional intern's work tasks.