DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL
INTERNSHIP MODEL AND
ITS SUPPORT SYSTEM
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

DIM-4-HE

SHORT VERSION

GUIDELINES OF

DIGITAL INTERNSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Digital Internship Model

This short guide contains concentrated practical advice to improve the effectiveness of internships. It provides a brief overview of three stages of internships: before, during and after the internship. Here we also stress the specifics of digital internships, however, the stages and elements described in it can be applied to any form of internship.

An internship is a period of practical training carried out by a student within an organisation. Digital (also called "virtual" or "remote") internship provides students with an opportunity to gain professional experience at local or international level without the conventional requirement of being physically present in an office.

BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP

Activities during this stage should be aimed at making sure that students are well-prepared, focused and productive during their internship. Establishing a common understanding between the three stakeholders before starting the internship and a joint guidance of the interns by both the company and higher education institution is necessary. ICT may provide a means to communicate more intensively, helping to bridge the differences between the goals and expectations of the company and HEI.

1.1. Create learning objectives for internship. Learning objectives are statements that describe what information, skills, and behaviors students should be able to demonstrate after receiving training. Create at least two learning objectives of internship that will help the student and the supervisors from HEI and from the receiving organisations to evaluate the learning progress of the intern. Focus learning objectives on select areas that the student will be exposed to throughout the internship.

1.2. Prepare materials for an internship. The package of necessary materials (e.g., internship agreement, internship regulations, evaluation forms etc.) should be developed and made available to students and supervisors before the internship. The list of materials useful for internship and digital internship can be expanded according to the needs of your HEI.

1.3. Help students find their host organisation. In general, HEI should ensure that students get an internship and connect students to internship opportunities. A list of potential host organisations and student's preparation for the interview with them are crucial components to the success of

an internship experience. It is important to match the student with the right host organisation.

1.4. Preparation (informative, technological and psychological) of students for the internship. We suggest organising the introductory lecture about the internship as an orientation event for students before the internship starts and gives an opportunity for students to receive essential information about internship requirements and process, to hear examples of good practice and ask questions, as well as to get to know their internship supervisors from HEI. Consider the needs of students to have some basic training in the use of digital tools necessary for video conferencing, networking, etc., because the technology used has an impact on the degree of involvement from the student. HEI should also consider providing students with some training or material (written or in video format) as to how to be self-motivated, self-directed learner and disciplined intern to achieve internship objectives.

1.5. Preparation of supervisors for the internship. The internship materials, supervision process and methods as well as digital tools for doing it remotely should be well described and adapted for supervisors to use them. We recommend organising a meeting with all the supervisors and to organisations and talking through the main points - the role of supervisor, the expected frequency of communication, the deliverables of internship and evaluation criteria, support provided to supervisor by HEI etc. Make sure that supervisors from receiving organisations receive all the necessary information about the internship before it starts - no later than when a student is assigned to the organisation.

DURING THE INTERNSHIP

In this stage, the focus is on the development of the intern's professional skills through practical and authentic tasks assigned to him by the supervisor in the organisation. During internship HEI provides academic coaching and feedback, and the company provides task mentoring and guidance.

2.1. Ensure intern's regular communication with supervisors. Make sure that interns have regular face-to-face interaction (online or in-person) with supervisors to help interns stay on track with their internship objectives and prepare deliverables of the internship. Supervisors role is to give feedback on performance, facilitate an intern's reflection about his/her progress towards internship objectives, give feedback about the intern's performance, encourage and motivate them and listen to and discuss the intern's concerns if such arise.

2.2. Ensure interns' connecting with one another. By sharing internship experience, approaches and solutions in work tasks, students give and receive support from each other. Communication channels, group chats and online forums can help students to feel connected to each other and address problems and suggest solutions on a weekly basis.

2.3. Provide opportunities to discuss internship issues. HEI should consider organising the support for interns in a format of regular seminars (weekly, bi-weekly etc.) together with peers, internship coordinators and supervisors from HEI (e.g., through video conferencing), aimed at exchanging experiences for the key assignments and receiving advice and support from both HEI and peers as well as clarifying temporary issues.

AFTER THE INTERNSHIP

Evaluation of interns' performance and progress are the central themes. Intern needs to receive a summative feedback on his/her performance and competencies for his/her further professional development. At this stage, interns also do an independent self-assessment of their performance during internship.

3.1. Intern's performance in the internship should be evaluated by supervisors according to the criteria defined before the internship.

3.2. Ensure that interns receive summative feedback from supervisors

about their performance and discuss the accomplishment of internship objectives.

3.3. Identify opportunities and difficulties in the internship program. We recommend the evaluation of cooperation between HEI and the receiving organisations. Focus on identification of strong points and future opportunities as well as problems so they can be avoided in the future. In case of digital internship, allocate special attention to evaluate technological aspects of internship: availability and usefulness of certain technological tools, intern's and supervisor's readiness in the use of these technologies.

More detailed and extensive guidelines of internship for HEIs can be found in GUIDELINES OF DIGITAL INTERNSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS