

2. DURING THE INTERNSHIP

In this stage, the focus is on the development of your professional skills through work tasks assigned to you by the supervisor in the receiving organisation. Most interns are also required by HEI

to write an internship diary. Constant communication and feedback between you and your supervisor in the receiving organisation is the key for the success of an internship, especially – digital internship.

General success strategies during digital internship

Make a schedule. Set regular hours or a routine. Prepare for each workday as if you were going to an office such as make a daily to-do list including meetings to stay on task. One of the most difficult parts about a digital internship is the unstructured time. Making a daily schedule will allow you to plan out when you're going to work on assignments so that you're always on top of your work. Choose the tool that will help you to plan the time (paper planner, google calendar etc.).

Set goals every day or every week. This will give you the opportunity to see your progression over a period of time. Whether it's short term or long-term, setting goals allows you to push yourself in a positive direction during digital internships. It also helps you keep track of your progress, so you'll know if there's ever a time when you need to push yourself more.

Take initiative. When you know something needs to be done, do it before you're asked. Supervisors will appreciate your taking initiative and showing that you can do things without being told to. The goal of an internship is to learn, so take advantage of all of the opportunities that you can. If you see an opportunity to work on a new kind of project or to listen in on a call with the CEO, don't be afraid to ask about it. Not only should you start projects before you're asked to, but don't be afraid to ask for new tasks and come up with original ideas as well. Try asking "what would you like me to work on if I finish this portion of the work or this project ahead of time?".

Stay in contact. Clarify tasks and projects as needed. Contact the supervisor right away if you feel that you need support in a work task. Ask about people involved in the project or people who may be important sources of information to complete the project.

Ask for feedback. As an intern, it's important to show enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Ask clarifying questions whenever you need to do so. Asking for feedback consistently makes it apparent that you care about the work you are doing and you want to improve. It can be tough to hear improvements your supervisor would like you to make, but in the long run you'll be a better intern and employee.

Track your progress. Keep a log of your work – tasks completed, accomplishments – to share with your supervisor. This will also come in handy when you update your resume.

Be patient. This may be the organisation's first time having a (digital) internship as well. There will likely be some bumps along the way.

Socialize. Use opportunities to communicate with your co-workers and other interns virtually or in-person. Apart from that, prioritize your time with family and friends outside of work if your internship is virtual or hybrid. These are people who can satisfy your social needs and offset your "alone time" while working virtually. Try to make plans in the evenings and on weekends. It doesn't even have to be in-person if that's not possible; phone calls and Zoom sessions can be just as effective.

The main activities of interns during the internship usually are:

- Carrying out work tasks
- Regular and productive communication with supervisors and receiving feedback
- Communicating with other interns/students
- Integrating into the organisation
- Working on the materials that you will have to submit after the internship

2.1. CARRY OUT WORK TASKS INDIVIDUALLY OR IN A TEAM

Carrying out the work tasks assigned by the supervisor in the receiving organisation is one of the main activities during the internship. Work tasks provide you opportunities to learn and develop professional skills and competencies.

When the supervisor assigns you a work task, make sure that you understood:

- what is the outcome of the task (e.g., a list composed; an architectural sketch drawn; a number of customers informed about the sales campaign)
- what is the deadline for delivery of the task
- how to carry out the task, what stages it has
- what are the tools/programs for carrying out the task and which platforms should be used for collaboration, review, and delivery of work such as a shared network folder
- what is your level of autonomy in carrying out the task (which parts of tasks you can do with/without supervision and in which you can generate his own solutions and ideas)
- where to look for support if needed to carry out the task (e.g., whom you can ask for advice, where you can find additional information and instructions etc.)
- which employees you have to collaborate with if it is a team work and how to contact them

2.2. HAVE REGULAR AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH SUPERVISORS AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK

Regular face-to-face meetings with your supervisor are important to monitor your progress.

The more your supervisor is prepared for such formal or semi-formal meetings, the better, so provide the supervisor with the outline and required materials prior to the actual meeting and have an

agenda ready with a list of items you would like to discuss during the meeting. Prioritize topics that are time sensitive or urgent to ensure you address those first. Try to discuss all the important issues face to face with your supervisor, as electronic means of communication are often inadequate.

You can vary the ways of communication with your supervisor. Informal, spontaneous communication plays an important role in building rela-

tionships and establishing trust, and helps the student and the supervisor to get to know each other better.

Criteria of effective communication

- Clarity (understandable message)
- Conciseness (straight and short message; no wordiness, empty phrases, and redundancies)
- Correctness (accurate, fact-based and grammatically correct information)
- Completeness (message reveals the whole picture and leaves no guesswork)
- Coherence (logical, organized and relevant information, smoothly presented)
- Consideration (before speaking, consider your words and their potential effects on the listener).
- Courtesy (avoid inappropriate jokes, insults, or an aggressive tone)
- Schedule. If you don't have this set up already, propose regularly scheduled meetings or "check-ins" with your supervisor on a biweekly or weekly basis.
- Be candid and straightforward. If you are running into a roadblock or are unsure of next steps, you should ask those questions. A good supervisor will provide you with guidance, besides, timely informing about problems is better than letting supervisor know about problems after a deadline.
- Get to know your supervisor. Try to understand your supervisor's work-style, preferences in communication (How do they prefer to communicate? When is a good time to have meetings with them?). Take the time to learn from them, share your goals with them, and ask questions
- Use proper communication channels (SMS alert system, email, intranet, or instant messaging application etc.) and tools. A microphone/headset combination will alleviate background noise and improve the clarity of your conversations. More information can be found in the [Student Guide to Using Zoom](#).
- See more tips for online communication in section [COMMUNICATION IN INTERNSHIP](#)

Best practices for communicating with your supervisor

- Be an attentive and engaged listener. Write down supervisor's suggestions or feedback, and reflect on how you can incorporate it into your work.
- Come prepared with talking points. Jot down some updates you have, questions you want to ask, and be prepared to write down any requests or tasks that they may have for you.

Asking for and receiving feedback

Feedback is:

- information about how one is doing in effort to reach a goal;
- both giving and receiving information;
- helpful for the intern and the supervisor to assess and adjust internship objectives, work tasks and workload.

An internship is an opportunity to learn. Your supervisor does not expect you to already know all the answers. Encourage your supervisor to provide feedback after an assignment so they know you're interested in growing. You can initiate the conversation by saying something like this: "I would love to make the most of my internship, and in doing so, I would appreciate any thoughts or advice you have on what I could be doing better."

Not everyone feels comfortable giving regular feedback. If the supervisor does not provide feedback, request feedback no later than 3 or 4 weeks into the position to make sure you're on the right track.

Feedback is effective when you:

- listen and accept the feedback as genuine and helpful
- give the feedback serious thought and decide the consequences of changing or not changing
- respond and engage in a dialogue

Tips for receiving feedback

Have an Open Mind – constructive criticism is not intended to bring you down, but rather to challenge you to develop and grow into a successful young professional. Regardless of the tone it is delivered in, focus on the words and the specifics of what is being said. Whether you agree or disagree with the feedback, thank supervisors for sharing their insight with you.

Find a balance between taking constructive criticism and standing your ground – your supervisor will appreciate your ability to respond well to constructive criticism. On the other hand, if you are confident in your strengths, don't be afraid to express it. Asking for too much feedback also is not optimal because constantly asking for approval can reflect insecurity and lack of self-sufficiency. If you start to see feedback as 'affirmation' or you notice that the feedback is no longer instructive, it is a sign that you are given too much feedback.

Communicate Clear Action Steps – once you have received the feedback, verbally affirm that you are going to use it to improve your performance. Thank your supervisor for the feedback

and communicate some action steps on what you could do immediately to implement the advice that you are given. This will show that you are truly invested in your development and will increase your trust level with your supervisor to have more conversations about your growth.

Keep notes of the feedback you receive – treat the notes like a commitment to yourself to change and improve. Notes are also useful because you can come back to them in the future and see your progress.

Follow through on your action steps. This will show that you have a high degree of integrity, which is always a trait that employers are looking for in future hires. Make a commitment to get back to the supervisor later regarding the feedback when you have created some changes using it. For example, a week or a month later, you notice improvements; you can send your supervisor a message saying "Thank you for the advice. I changed my approach as you recommended and I can already see great results. Thanks so much for your help." (Schwartz, 2017).

2.3. INTEGRATE INTO THE RECEIVING ORGANISATION

As much as the internship context allows, try to integrate into the organisation's work culture and interact with other employees not only in formal work-related projects, tasks and staff meetings (through videoconference or in-person), but also in informal contexts.

In digital internship or hybrid internship, one of the biggest challenges for interns can be the lack of face-to-face socialization. Even if you'll never meet your coworkers in person, it's important to connect with them on a professional and personal level.

Tips for socialisation with co-workers:

- Ask for a mentor at work – someone besides your supervisor who you can go to with questions and who you can chat with and learn from.
- Make the most of your meetings with your supervisor and your team. Use video resources as much as possible and don't be afraid to ask questions and show interest in their opinion.
- Ask your supervisor if there are any virtual events for their employees to connect, such as virtual coffee breaks, happy hours, game nights, etc. If not, you can suggest or organize something.

Important caveat: If you discover that you are interning in an environment where you cannot be yourself, where you are consistently shot down, demeaned, or harshly and personally critiqued, think about whether the internship is worth continuing, and very hard about accepting any job offers the company might extend at your internship's conclusion.

2.4. BE IN CONTACT WITH OTHER INTERNS

Apart from communicating with your supervisor and co-workers, you should have a positive and supportive relationship with your fellow interns. For example, you might be active in group chat where you can share your internship experience, to address problems and suggest solutions. If there are other interns in the receiving organisation, it is also very useful to stay in contact with them both within working time and outside it.

2.5. WORK ON THE MATERIALS THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO SUBMIT AFTER THE INTERNSHIP

Gradually develop materials (e.g., internship report, internship diary, internship portfolio etc.) that you will have to submit for evaluation after the internship. When preparing your report, be aware of any confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements you may have agreed on with the receiving organisation (e.g., employers may ask interns to sign confidentiality statements about what information you may disclose in your internship report and elsewhere). If this is the case, individuals and business partners may be described rather than named, and projects may be recounted in general terms rather than specific details.

Make sure that you find time in the midst of carrying out work tasks to work on the deliverable of the internship since leaving it to the last moment can cause stress. Do not hesitate to ask for advice from your supervisor from HEI if questions arise about the final report or other materials.