



# ONLINE INTERNSHIPS

## AN EMPLOYER GUIDE

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## What defines an online internship?

An online internship is a work placement with an employer, which is carried out digitally and remotely rather than in-person at the organisation. Online internships are also known as virtual, remote or e-internships and can be completed from anywhere in the world. All the student needs is a laptop or PC and an internet connection.

An online internship typically includes: an online induction, a group or individual project, online professional development and digital meetings.

Online internships do not require office space, the intern also does not need to relocate to participate. However, as the intern is working independently from home, the internships often require careful supervision, to ensure the student has appropriate support and is able to interact successfully with other colleagues in the organisation.

An appropriate level of technological competence to undertake the role is frequently required, so initial IT training may need to be provided.

## ONLINE INTERNSHIPS:

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- What are they?
- What to consider when setting up an online internship?
- Why host one?
- How can you advertise your opportunity?
- How can you ensure your internship is successful?



*"It's more flexible than a traditional on-site internship so you can create your own timetable for your internship. You can work at your own pace and frame your work around your existing schedule. Also, because a remote internship can be done at home it saves costs on travel and work attire. It can also reduce the stress that might come from working a 9-to-5 on-site internship because you are in the comfort of your own home."*

*- Student*

## What to consider when setting up an online internship?

Depending on your organisation's requirements, there are different types of online internships to suit your needs. Factors to consider include:

- **TIMING:** Summer internships usually take place between June and August. Term-time internships usually start in September or January.
- **DURATION:** There is no set duration for an internship, it could last a few weeks or several months. The most important aspect is to ensure the intern will have adequate time to complete their tasks.
- **REMUNERATION:** Factors to consider when offering a salary are the experience required, the skill-set and level of responsibility. If an internship is linked to an academic module or course, then a helpful Government site is [National Minimum Wage](#). Short-term, voluntary, internships can also offer students valuable work experience, particularly when combined with training opportunities.
- **COMMITMENT:** Interns can be part-time or full-time, if offered in vacation periods. During term-time the University recommends that students work for no more than 20 hours per week to allow for degree commitments.
- **TASK TYPE:** Interns may work individually, or as part of a group. They might be engaged in research activities, or may be carrying out design or administrative work. The nature of the task can vary widely, but should be appropriate for an undergraduate to complete, with supervision and support.



## Why host online internship?

Hosting an online internship can yield several benefits to the host organisation:

- **INCREASED DIVERSITY** Online internships open the opportunity to students from a broader range of backgrounds, some of whom might not be able to complete an onsite internship (e.g. students from remote locations or with caring responsibilities). An increasingly diverse intern pool can bring valuable life experiences and different perspectives to the organisation.
- **TALENT POOL:** Linked to increased diversity, online internships offer access to a larger pool of potential interns, and accordingly a broad range of technical expertise, research experience, social media skills and more.
- **PRODUCTIVITY:** Remote / online interns can often accomplish more work within a shorter time frame due to a lack of interruptions, no need to commute, and the freedom to work at their peak performance times (which might be outside the typical 9-5 work schedule).

### QUALITY ASSURANCE:

Guidance on remote working and internships has been drawn from the organisation [ACAS](#) and the [QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Work-based Learning](#).

An internship should be a learning experience for the student, with the skills and knowledge gained transferable to other contexts.

The experience should have a defined beginning and end, with appropriate support and supervision offered throughout.

The experience should be designated an 'internship' and should include participation in authentic organisational tasks.

The intern should be provided with the appropriate resources to complete their tasks, and the tasks should be appropriate for an entry-level employee to complete.

Ideally the student should be provided the opportunity to develop a network of contacts



## Advertising your opportunity

**The School of Psychology can advertise internships to both undergraduate and taught postgraduate psychology students. When preparing an online internship job description, key information to include:**

- Expected hours of remote working and duration of internship (weeks, months)
- A clear description of responsibilities and example deliverables
- Health & safety issues
- Keeping in contact
- Guidance around storage of information, IT equipment and data protection
- How performance will be managed, available training and induction
- Insurance coverage
- Any allowable expenses and salary arrangements
- A named contact if issues arise
- Annual leave entitlement

*“Self-discipline and time management skills may be crucial for the student interning from home, not only for a strong commitment to carrying out the job tasks but also to allow self-care (as working virtually can result in extremely long hours on a computer).”*

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Employer

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## Ensuring a successful internship

### MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Research suggests there can sometimes be a disconnect between student and employer expectations regarding the internship experience, support and achievements. It is important to be specific regarding the quantity of work expected and the opportunities for the student to become immersed in the company culture. Ideally each internship should begin with a meeting to discuss work commitments, learning outcomes and student - employer requirements.

### GOAL SETTING

Online internships need a strong task structure including work guidelines and regular organised meeting times. Interns should have the opportunity to interact with peers and colleagues in order to receive informal support. A range of media, from emails, to Teams meetings and online conferences, can be used to interact with the intern and ensure goals are appropriate and understood.

### MENTORING

Research suggests that mentoring enhances intern skill development and supports achievement. Assigning an intern a mentor (who is not their direct supervisor / manager) increases networking opportunities and has been shown to enhance intern satisfaction and work commitment.

### COMMUNICATION

Communication between intern and the organisation should be regular and a proportion should be synchronous (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams). Ideally the supervisor for the project should be responsive to communications from the intern, and should try and provide timely feedback on task progress and work quality.

This leaflet was created as part of an online internship study by Leah Hillari and Darja Wischerath, Employability Interns. The project was supervised by Drs Amy Irwin and Joy Perkins at the University of Aberdeen.

If you wish to discuss internship advertising and opportunities please contact Dr Amy Irwin: [a.irwin@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:a.irwin@abdn.ac.uk)