Center for Internships & Community Engagement
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Remote/Virtual Internship Guidelines

Remote internships involve work arrangements that take place away from the primary business address. While increasing in popularity, unpaid remote internships should be carefully designed to meet federal labor and university guidelines. **Virtual internships** are a type of remote internship that involves primarily the use of online and cloud-based technologies for conducting assigned work activities.

The following guidelines pertain to both remote and virtual internships, and should be used in conjunction with the **Internship Design Worksheet (via CICE's website)** and are subject to the general policies on academic internships at Cal State Fullerton:

1. **Defined Learning Outcomes.** Supervisors should identify 3-5 key areas of growth in industry-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful career advancement with the intern **PRIOR** to the start of the internship.

2. **Timely Feedback.** Similar to online learning environments, supervisors should review intern deliverables and provide timely, formative feedback to students on a regular basis. Supervisors are asked to schedule feedback sessions for a minimum of one-hour each week to engage in direct mentorship with the student regarding their progress towards learning outcomes and areas of professional development. Pre-planned training topics should also be discussed during these sessions. Synchronous meeting platforms should be used for this portion of the internship, preferably video conferencing or telephone.

3. **Consistent Communication.** Progress summaries should be provided consistently, at least once per week. This includes an update on expected work activities for the week, outcomes from prior work submissions, and other relevant announcements pertaining to the organization. A good practice is to schedule a regular email report around or on the same day/time each week.

4. **Synchronous Training and Mentorship.** Remote internships offer a wide flexibility for both work location and scheduling. To ensure that each student has a sufficient learning experience above and beyond the general assignment of tasks, remote internship host sites should incorporate synchronous training and mentorship along with any asynchronous activities expected of the intern. This includes the use of pre-scheduled video conferencing or the use of online, cloud-based tools for real-time editing of submitted documents, creative

projects, or any written deliverables. Internship sites are encouraged to use a formal learning management system (LMS), such as Adobe Connect or Zoom, for an optimal online training experience.

5. **Pre-arranged Schedules.** Although a key feature of remote internships is the flexibility of the work schedule, supervisors and interns should agree upon a definitive time allotment per week and per day whenever possible for internship activities. **Shift caps** – defining the amount of accrued time allotted for any given task - are strongly recommended to avoid unreasonable work demands on the student and any conflict with reported internship hours. If a defined work schedule and/or shift cap is not established, disputes may result as to how long any given task may take and may lead to conflict between the supervisor and student regarding the number of reported hours for the semester.

6. **Reimbursement of Expenses.** Students engaged in virtual internships should not incur any personal expenses as a result of the internship's "remote" status. Any such costs, including the purchase of software and hardware for the purposes of the internship, should be covered by the internship host site, or alternative arrangements discussed with the student prior to starting the internship.

7. **Organizational Involvement.** In addition to facilitating a remote or virtual internship, site supervisors should make a good faith effort to integrate the intern into the organization's work culture. This may include client visits and attendance at select team meetings, use of company tools and resources, and any other forms of access to business team members.

8. **Buffer Moments.** While not required, a best practice for telecommuting includes the explicit permission for interns/employees to schedule a brief break away from their home-office or workspace. Giving expressed permission for interns to take a short walk or have a meal, or any other preferred re-energizing activity ultimately helps promote stronger overall work performance and improved job satisfaction. Student interns may also encounter a variety of environmental (i.e. limited physical and/or quiet space, etc.) and situational issues (i.e. shared computing or internet resources; care-giving responsibilities; etc.) that may prohibit or inhibit their ability to work proficiently for long stretches of time.

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