



Managing a remote internship – Employ.ed in an SME

Managing an intern is a rewarding experience, an opportunity to get talent into your company and benefit from a new perspective on your work. Managing your intern remotely will be different to having them in the office with you, here are some tips to help you and your intern have a successful internship.

Careers Service Support

The Careers Service team are currently working remotely, please get in touch with us by email if you have any questions or are looking for support with your intern. The Careers Service will be providing online support for interns over the Summer. Details will be emailed to your Intern, please encourage them to engage with these activities.

Before they start

Sort out the practicalities before they start so they can make a smooth start to their internship.

- Carry out health and safety checks with them. You can then get any necessary adjustments or equipment in place before they start. The government has a useful guide including a home workstation checklist: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm#>
- Ensure your intern has the equipment they need and arrange access to bespoke or licenced software and have any log-in details they need.
- Make the intern aware of any company guidance on working remotely.
- Ask them if they might face any barriers to working remotely? Are they based in a different time zone? Do they have caring responsibilities? Ensure they know what you can work around and what won't be possible.
- Ensure you get any legal documents or contracts sorted out early. Printing, scanning and the post can add time to this process.
- Keep in touch before they start, send some background information on your company or articles about their project to keep the intern engaged through the on-boarding process.

Induction

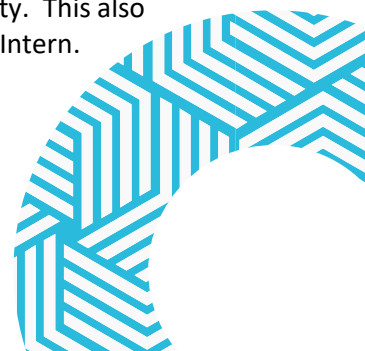
Plan a comprehensive induction for your intern. Create a check list you can go through with them, this creates an opportunity for the intern to bring up any potential problems or difficulties that can be ironed out at an early stage.

It could include:

- Health and Safety checks
- Access to systems and software required
- A contact list and instructions on setting up meetings
- Email works OK
- Learn the communications tools you use.
- Training they need to complete
- How they will manage their well-being
- Processes for leave and illness

Objectives

Setting clear objectives for the project and the intern's development are essential, when working remotely these become critically important. Using the SMART method will ensure clarity. This also gives you an opportunity to have a discussion on setting expectations, for you and the Intern.





Embedding Company Culture

If there is no opportunity to physically introduce your intern to the team or place of work, it is going to be challenging to embed company and team culture with your intern. While working as an intern we are looking for them to shift their mindset from student to employee. This is essential to ensure the students are having a workplace learning experience, rather than an extension of their academic studies. What can you do to help this?

- Think about assigning them more than one buddy.
- Arrange for colleagues not working directly with the intern to introduce themselves and discuss their role – this is helpful for the intern’s career learning and to build up their network.
- Explain your company values, aims and objectives and how they and the project they are working on contribute to this.
- Encourage your intern to set up their own meetings with colleagues.
- Include them in any virtual socialising your company is doing e.g. virtual coffee, film or book clubs, Friday drinks.
- Ensure they are on the staff email distribution list.
- If your company has recently made a transition to remote working, discuss the challenges and benefits that you have come across.
- Encourage them to update their email signature with their job title, team and your company.
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Communicate, communicate, communicate

Building up a rapport and ensuring that trust is built between you and the intern is necessary when working remotely as they will be working independently in a different environment to you. You will not have the same visual availability that you would have in an office environment. It is also the best way to embed team and company culture.

Decide on how you will communicate, video calls can be good to build relationships as you can see body language and get to know someone a bit better. Whatever you decide, ensure you are both clear on what it is and know how to use the technology. The first couple of weeks will naturally involve lots of conversations through induction and getting the project underway. Following this you may want to have a regular slot every day to catch ups and as they get settled into the project you can move to less frequent catch ups. A daily check-in – a quick email, call or text message from a duty of care perspective is advisable.

Time keeping and self-management

These are key skills that interns tell us they want to develop through their internship and essential for working remotely. Knowing about barriers in their home working environment will help with your expectations. Ensure the intern knows how to manage their diary, how to share this with you and ask them what tools they are going to use and check in to see if they are working.

The intern is learning to work, these are helpful conversations to have with them. Be clear on deadlines and when you want them to communicate with you, especially if they are ahead or behind schedule. Communicate any standards that your company follows so they are on the same page as the rest of your team.

Working remotely is a different way of working, so you may want to think of it as task bound rather than time bound. Think about what your expectations are and communicate these clearly to your intern so that they are clear when they should be available.

Skills Development

Discussing with your intern the skills they are developing will enrich their experience and help them to evaluate their skills. These are a few they may be developing:

- Communication





- Building an online network
- Demonstrating initiative
- Managing their time and workload
- Managing up and setting expectations (communicating challenges and success with you)
- Resilience
- Self-management
- Adaptability/flexibility

Encourage Reflection

This is a unique situation, the world of work is changing at speed due to current circumstances. To help you intern learn and adapt to the situation questions you could ask them are:

- what are they observing about your place of work?
- what do they think about the leadership demonstrated by businesses in your field?
- How do they feel about being a remote worker?
- How bonded do they feel to the team? Can you help with this?
- Have they made the adjustment from student to worker?

Celebrate Success!

The Internship experience is a step into the world of work for students and should allow them to begin to understand their identity as an employee, to discover their strengths and figure out what they like and what they don't. This can still be achieved through a virtual or remote internship given the right support. Ensure they know it and you celebrate their successes throughout the internship and communicate their achievements with your colleagues.

Additional sources of advice during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Scottish Government advice: <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/coronavirus-advice>

UK Government advice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Scottish Enterprise - <https://www.scottish-enterprise.com/>

Business Gateway – Coronavirus business support

Business Gateway – Managing a team remotely <https://www.bgateway.com/resources/managing-a-team-remotely-how-to-make-it-work-better-for-everyone>

University of Edinburgh guidance for students: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/current-students>

Contact the Internships and Work Experience Team at Employ.ed@ed.ac.uk





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Careers Service

