

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

## Remote Micro-Internship Sponsor Toolkit

*Thank you for your interest in sponsoring a micro-internship experience for a current Oberlin student. This document serves as a guide to understanding, developing, and implementing a remote micro-internship experience in connection with the new [Junior Practicum Program](#).*

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*The Career Development Center is available to assist you with envisioning your remote micro-internship experience. Please email [ocareers@oberlin.edu](mailto:ocareers@oberlin.edu) with any questions along the way.*

## Background

### What is a Micro-Internship?

Micro-internships are remote experiences that connect students with professionals in their field of interest and create opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills. Micro-internships are generally shorter-term and more flexible than traditional internships.

### Duration and Scope

- The micro-internship should last six to eight weeks with about ten hours of work each week.
- The micro-internship is remote, allowing organizations and students to participate in the experience regardless of where they are based.
- The micro-internship experience will begin in early/mid-October (after the student completes the Career Readiness & Skill-Building Summit) and will conclude in early December.
- The specific details of the experience will vary depending on the needs, skills, and goals of the internship sponsor and the student. This flexibility allows you to create the experience in a way that is beneficial to your organization and the student intern.

## Establishing the Experience

The goal of this experience is two-fold:

- 1) to provide meaningful and hands-on learning opportunities for students interested in a specific career industry; and
- 2) to provide a direct benefit to your organization. You have the flexibility to organize the micro-internship how you see fit based on your organization's needs.

### Getting Started

While you do not need to know all the details for the experience at first, it is helpful to have an idea of different possibilities. Below are some recommendations and questions to help frame the micro-internship experience:

- Although the intern will be expected to operate independently, a dedicated supervisor should be assigned to act as the intern's point of contact and help them adjust to the role and organization. This could be you or a designated employee who will be able to give the support and guidance for the intern to complete their assigned tasks.
- Projects, networking opportunities, and professional development activities will provide the intern with a well-rounded experience. Ask yourself the following questions to get started:
  1. What are the current needs of your organization, and how might an intern support these needs?
  2. Are there any items on your organizational wish list that your team has not had the bandwidth to tackle?

3. What are some things you wish you would have known when you first started your career?
4. Who are the key players in your organization or professional network that can help provide the intern with insight into your career field?

## Sample Projects and Elements

A student may spend the 6-8-week duration of the micro-internship working on one large project or a series of smaller projects. These projects could include:

### Research

- Literature review: Leverage online databases to find information pertinent to the organization's needs around a specific topic
- Benchmarking: Review industry and competitor best practices and provide recommendations for adaptation
- Policy research: Assess and summarize regulatory or legislative practices and how they impact the organization
- Market research: Compile information on organizations and demographics across industries
- Development: Research and evaluate potential target markets, product offerings, investments, funding sources, vendors, etc.
- Data collection: Create and distribute surveys
- Database management: Collect, maintain, and analyze large amounts of data

### Analysis

- Assessment and evaluation: Review internal practices and programs using qualitative or quantitative methods to ensure compliance and efficiency; identify and interpret areas for improvement
- Data analysis: Conduct statistical analysis, utilizing Stata, R, Excel, or coding
- Materials evaluation: Analyze and offer recommendations on materials including scripts, financial documents, policy memos, client presentations etc.

### Communication

- Internal communication: Present information to stakeholder groups across the organization through presentations, reports, memos, info sheets, etc.
- External communication: Create content for external constituency groups such as social media, press releases, email engagement, etc.
- Customer/client engagement: Meet with clients to gather information or share updates on behalf of the organization

### Creative

- Editing: Read scripts, book manuscripts, and other written materials to provide coverage notes and edits
- Content Creation: Produce, film, or write content for creative development, journalistic articles, or marketing purposes.

- Design: Create new products, databases, websites, etc.

### **Program Support**

- Program management: Create new programming or evaluate and revise existing programming, including in the context of virtual engagement
- Event planning: Coordinate meetings, agendas, or events to support the organizational mission
- Grant writing: Develop and co-write a grant application to secure funding to support new or existing programs and initiatives

### **Mentorship and Experiential Opportunities**

In addition to the assigned projects and tasks that the intern will complete, it is important that they are provided with opportunities to understand the culture of your organization and to network with other professionals in the field. Additional elements to support these goals could be added to the micro-internship experience, including:

- Set aside time to discuss entry-level positions in your field and/or the graduate/professional school application process (if applicable)
- Introduce the intern to professional associations or groups specific to your industry
- Assist the student with scheduling virtual “Lunch and Learns” or “Coffee Hours” with other professionals in the field
- Provide the intern with access to your organization’s Learning Management System or other professional development platforms
- Invite the intern to attend full organizational meetings, if possible, or to observe cross-functional team/departmental meetings and high-level staff meetings
- Shadow meetings with clients in the classroom/courtrooms/lab, etc.
- Ask the intern to interview at least three other professionals at your organization gain additional insight and perspective

## **Onboarding and Orientation**

It is important to set interns up for success at the beginning of their micro-internship. We recommend taking the time to onboard and orient them to your organization.

### **Pre-Internship**

- Inform other staff members: Be sure to send an email to your co-workers informing them that an intern will be joining you this fall. This is especially helpful if you plan to engage co-workers in the micro-internship experience.
- Prepare resources: After you have decided the intern’s area(s) of focus, be sure to give them access to internal documents or resources that they will need (i.e. Google Drive, Microsoft Teams, internal databases, etc.)

- Complete HR paperwork: If your organization requires interns to complete a confidentiality/non-disclosure agreement, be sure to send this to the intern ahead of time, so they can begin work as soon as possible.

### **Laying the Foundation for Success**

Internships can be oriented to their new organization and role in a variety of ways — here are some recommendations:

- Establish the relationship: We recommend that you meet with the intern on the first day to introduce yourself, set expectations, and discuss their role and responsibilities.
- Provide the context: Discuss the mission, values, and goals of your organization and how the intern’s work will support these initiatives.
- Connect with other members of the team/organization: Arrange meetings between the intern and other members of the team to help the intern feel more connected to the organization while enhancing their understanding of workplace culture. In a virtual format, this can be accomplished by having a large call to introduce the intern, having the intern join a staff meeting, or set up individual calls between the intern and those who they might interact with during this work.
- Complete necessary trainings: All students receiving micro-internships through the Junior Practicum program will have completed the Career Readiness and Skill-Building Summit, a month-long program that will provide them with training and industry-specific knowledge. Organizations are certainly welcome to ask interns to take on more specialized tasks, but may need to provide additional training.
- Introduce organizational culture: Because the micro-internship will take place remotely, interns may have more difficulty developing a sense of an organization’s culture. Therefore, explicit discussions about organizational culture will enhance the micro-internship experience. Here are some examples:
  - Review dress code
  - Discuss organizational values and how they inform policies and practices
  - Provide insight into on-going staff development
  - Discuss work/life balance, how staff are supported, etc.
  - Share the calendar of company events and invite them to attend, as applicable.
  - Provide interns with company materials, newsletters, annual reports, organizational charts, memos from CEO, press releases etc.
  - Give contact information and photos of staff they may be working with

### **Supervising and Mentoring**

While the intern should work relatively independently throughout the micro-internship experience, regular check-ins between the intern and their supervisor(s) and co-workers will

foster mentorship, learning, and success. We recommend emphasizing the following areas to strengthen the remote internship experience:

### **Communication**

- It is critical that you clarify your preferred mode(s) of communication (email, phone, Slack, etc.) with your intern(s) at the very beginning of the internship.
- Set up weekly video or phone check-ins with your intern to discuss their progress and receive/give constructive feedback. If you are able, video check-ins are preferred as it enhances relationship-building.
- Consider having interns submit a regularly-scheduled email report in which they report information including: challenges or problems encountered, progress toward project objectives, and any questions they may have.
- Establish expectations around message response timeliness both for sponsors and interns (ex: aim to respond to questions within 24 hours).

### **Create a Work Plan**

Building a structured micro-internship experience will allow both the intern and the supervisor(s) to make the most out of their time together. We recommend the following:

- Work Schedule: Discuss what days/hours the intern will work
- Learning Goals: Discuss what the intern hopes to accomplish by the end of the micro-internship
- Metrics of Success: Clear expectations regarding what the organization's goals, in terms of both projects to be completed and the overall experience. This should include an overview of any deliverables, including an expected timeline.

### **Additional Resources:<sup>1</sup>**

Below are some suggestions for interns and supervisors to stay connected in a remote work environment — feel free to use any as you see fit:

- Face-to-face Communication – [GoToMeeting](#), [Zoom](#), FaceTime, [WebEx](#), [Zoho Meetings](#), etc.
- Other communication tools – [Slack](#), Email, Instant Messenger, etc.
- Free project management tools – [Asana](#), [OpenProject](#), [nTask](#), [Monday](#), etc.
- Online file sharing – [DropBox](#), [Box](#), [GoFile](#), [WeTransfer](#) etc.

## **Feedback and Support**

Providing clear and regular feedback about work performance is essential in a remote environment. Consider ways to deliver real-time feedback about work progress to ensure the intern is clear about what they are doing well and areas for improvement. Additionally,

<sup>1</sup> From Middlebury Remote Internship Guide

encourage the intern to share about their remote work experience. Ask what is working well and what is challenging for them in a virtual environment<sup>2</sup>.

Here are some of the biggest needs identified by interns generally<sup>3</sup>:

- Supervisor who can openly discuss workload and answer questions
- Clear outline of roles and responsibilities
- Deadlines for when their work should be completed
- Honest and regular feedback regarding professionalism and productivity

Here are some things interns have reported to be most valuable in their experience:

- Understanding both the context and value of their work within the organization
- Feeling valued by their supervisor and co-workers
- Learning industry-specific knowledge and skills they could use in the future
- Feeling ownership of their projects

## Concluding the Experience

At the end of the experience, we recommend that the intern have a chance to present their final work to their supervisor and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the sponsor should have a structured evaluation and feedback meeting with their intern to discuss the intern's learning and progress over the course of the micro-internship. Here are some specific areas we recommend reviewing with the intern at the end of the experience:

- Success and challenges
- Communication skills
- Professionalism and career development skills, including what they learned about the industry/organization
- Focus and attention to detail
- Areas for growth and improvement

Thank you again for engaging in this professional development and learning opportunity for current Oberlin students. We sincerely appreciate your support and willingness to pitch in for fellow Obies. If you have any questions throughout this process, please contact the Career Development Center at [ocareers@oberlin.edu](mailto:ocareers@oberlin.edu), and a member of our team will be in touch.

<sup>2</sup> From University of Minnesota Twin Cities Virtual Internship Guidelines

<sup>3</sup> From University of Nebraska Lincoln employer toolkit

## Appendix A: Sample Weekly Schedule

### Independent Work Time

- After an initial onboarding process, which will include establishing expectations for deliverables and workplace engagement, the intern will spend the majority of their 10-hour weekly commitment focusing on individual assignments.
- Depending on the nature of the project(s), this time could be structured into daily or weekly sub-tasks for the intern to complete. This time will also likely include back-and-forth questions over email between the intern and supervisor(s).

### Supervisor Check-in

- Supervisors are encouraged to schedule at least one weekly check-in meeting with the intern (via videoconferencing whenever possible) to provide mentorship and advice, review and share feedback on assigned projects, connect the intern with resources and support, and answer any questions.
- Consider an additional mid-week email check-in with the intern to answer any questions, concerns, or challenges throughout the week.

### Mentorship/Networking Opportunity

- Schedule a networking opportunity for your intern during the week.
- Invite a co-worker or another professional within the field to connect with your intern and conduct a brief presentation or Q&A session with them.
- Be sure to prep the intern prior to the mentorship/networking opportunity, or to direct them to resources where they can prepare themselves.

### Shadowing Opportunity

- Invite the intern to join you at a weekly staff meeting to gain insight into the organization's culture and operations.
- If possible, have the intern shadow you during a meeting with external constituents (i.e. community members, patients, customers, etc.)

### End-of-Week Check-In

- Schedule an end-of-week check-in to review progress. Answer any questions the intern may have and give constructive feedback as necessary.
- Preview upcoming week and answer any final questions.

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### Additional Resources

- Hora, M.T. (2020). *What to do about internships in light of the COVID-19 pandemic? A short guide to online internships for colleges, students and employers*. Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions. UW-Madison.
- Greater Cleveland Partnership Virtual Internship Resources
- Virtual Internships– Checklist for Success from InternQube.com
- University of Michigan Guide on Virtual Internships and Remote Work for Interns