

**Employer Guidance to Virtual Internships (Professional Pathways):**

**10 Top Tips for Remote Working**

**1. Create a Work Space**

Interns are encouraged to create a dedicated workspace to approach working from home in an organised and efficient manner. If their home does not have a separate home office, we advise using a well-lit and least used space in their home that can provide them with enough room for their equipment and resources, ideally away from their rest areas.

They may be sharing their home with their family or flatmates so a protected work space may not be easy. Some ideas they could use include using headphones; have a sign on their room door or laptop ‘please do not disturb until …’; build in regular breaks, perhaps to play with the children in the household; or agree with others to not use domestic appliances during a certain time period.

As an employer please can you ensure your intern is abiding by [working safely with display screen equipment guidance](https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/)? If your intern has a disability please can we ask you to consider making [reasonable adjustments](https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments).

**2. Equipment and Technology**

The intern will need to discuss with you the equipment and technology they need to work remotely. Please provide them with the support them need to access the right systems e.g. shared inboxes and cloud file storage such as [MS One Drive](https://products.office.com/en-gb/onedrive/online-cloud-storage) or [Trello.](https://trello.com/)

They will also need to ensure they can access the right communication platforms such as [Skype for Business](https://www.skype.com/en/business/); [Cisco Webex Meetings](https://www.cisco.com/c/en_uk/products/conferencing/webex-meetings/index.html); [Meeting Owl](https://www.owllabs.com/meeting-owl?utm_campaign=brand-uk&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=ppc&msclkid=1b5c07f8a3db1418ba905965dc492dca); [Google Hangouts Meet](https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_uk/products/meet/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=emea-gb-all-en-dr-bkws-all-all-trial-e-t1-1008069&utm_content=text-ad-crnurturectrl-none-DEV_c-CRE_430903515059-ADGP_Hybrid%20%7C%20AW%20SEM%20%7C%20BKWS%20~%20EXA_M:1_GB_EN_Hangouts_Meet-KWID_43700052494145989-kwd-293231125089-userloc_9045340&utm_term=KW_google%20hangouts%20meet-g&ds_rl=1259922&gclid=CjwKCAjwkPX0BRBKEiwA7THxiEOLJ-sDw_IrCNH8S7pnuw9drqNbWVd9fAe2Dmxxd2fDmaev5QqXSRoC2yUQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds); [Zoom;](https://zoom.us/) [MS Teams](https://products.office.com/en-US/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software) and [GoToWebinar](https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb/webinar/lp/easy-webinars?cid=g2w_emea_ggs_cpc_brand_gotowebinar_e&gclid=CPHW-8jS8egCFY2BhQodfFQBNw).

We advise interns to be prepared for technology not working. Does their broadband have sufficient bandwidth and where they sit has good enough Wi-Fi strength? Maybe your company could provide a dongle to provide wireless or mobile broadband? If they lose connection could they set up a [WhatsApp Team group](https://www.whatsapp.com/) with you to still communicate to at least let the team know what is happening.

**3. Agreeing Clear Expectations**

We encourage interns to agree with you:

* When they are available to work and when they will be working.
* How they will stay in touch and who will organise this.
* When their work will be set and reviewed.
* How their performance will be measured and managed.
* Where their work will be stored and who has access it.
* When they will be taking breaks and how them will communicate this with others. Maybe they could enter their working hours in their signature; add an ‘out of office’ message on their email; enter their working hours on a shared team calendar.
* Who they should contact if they have any problems or their circumstances change.

**4. Getting Motivated and Being Productive**

We encourage interns to follow the following 3 steps to get motivated and stay productive:

**a) Strategize** - What do they want to achieve and why? What is the driver or motivation behind this? Set a goal and make a plan list of objectives, then break them down into a list of manageable tasks. Interns’ motivation is increased when they understand the bigger picture.

**b) Focus** - Quantify how long each task takes and book it into their schedule. To prioritise, we must work on the tasks that have the nearest deadline and are deemed to have the highest importance. To establish what are they highest importance activities interns are asked to consider:

* What are their own responsibilities and duties?
* What is their contribution to team duties?
* What is the impact of the work?
* Who requested the work to be undertaken? How important are they to the business and their career e.g. senior position; new customer; loyal customer.
* When was it requested?
* Who is the work being produced for?
* Who is leading on the work?
* Who do they need to collaborate with and what is their availability?
* How long does the work take to complete?
* How can the work be undertaken? Do they know how to undertake the work or does it require additional learning? Have they got access to the right information and systems?

Most people create a long ‘To Do List’, but once they have decided on their priorities they can create a ‘Must Do Today List’. If they receive a lot of new emails that distract them from their list, perhaps they could consider checking their emails twice a day to see if they need to re-prioritise their day. Would that be ok for you? Try and keep the structure of the day simple. Perhaps you could ask to hear their Must Do Today List’ and check in if they haven’t completed it?

**c) Commit** - Have they completed everything on the ‘Must Do Today List’? If not, reflect upon why this hasn’t worked? Is their strategy still correct? Did they prioritise correctly? Did they allocate enough time to each task them booked in? Perhaps they are procrastinating and working on the easy hits rather that the priorities? If so maybe they should ‘[eat the frog’](https://doist.com/blog/eat-the-frog-todoist/) or deal with the most challenging task of their day first?

Maybe they need to work on a new daily routine? Did they feel ready for a day of work by waking up on time, getting washed and dressed; exercised; had breakfast and ticked off one or more home-life priorities before them start work? Creating a new morning routine can be their ‘fake commute’.

Do they need to build in energisers during the day? A quick stretch, breath of fresh air and a healthy snack can help them press the reset button.

A good way to stay motivated is to also spend a moment at the end of the day to look at everything they have achieved that day and see how completing some urgent tasks have helped them get that one step closer to achieving their goals. Maybe you would like to hear these daily achievements?

Working from home is not all about challenge. We recommend interns reflect upon the positives it brings, for example, they have a flexible job; they can make a cooked lunch; and they can avoid the daily commute – improved sustainability. Appreciating the good things in life will help them feel more motivated.

**5. Communication Adjustments**

Developing and maintaining good working relationships with you and colleagues requires a change in communication when working remotely. As mentioned above, we encourage interns to be accountable about when they are working.

We have asked them to being mindful that their colleagues will have competing demands on their time when working at home, so check when they are available to communicate; it’s good to respect the boundaries people set.

People may be under pressure, so helping others, including by being kind and generous with their words will be appreciated. Perhaps the intern could instigate a virtual ‘water cooler’ chat to connect with colleagues in a non-work way.

**6. Virtual Meetings**

We have suggested the following to interns:

* Get ready in advance with their technology and agenda items.
* Consider colleagues in other time zones when they set meetings.
* Remember to switch on their camera; blur their background (or choose a suitable location) and consider their non-verbal communication. They will also need to think about how they are dressed and whether it is appropriate for this meeting. It would be helpful if you could relay your expectations on this.
* Invite others in to give their thoughts and ideas. Be specific and ask people by name, otherwise everyone could start talking at once.
* Speak slowly and clearly and pause before responding to others as sometimes there is a time lapse between transmissions.
* Perhaps appoint a meeting facilitator to monitor chat comments during the meeting?
* Avoid distractions like checking email or having side conversations with people in the group.
* It is useful for their records to keep a summary of key points and actions after a virtual individual or team meetings.

**7. Regular Breaks**

For the interns health and wellbeing it is important to take regular breaks; this includes physically moving and taking a break from looking at their screen. Stepping away from their desk at lunchtime will help them feel re-energised for the afternoon ahead. They could even set up reminders to take a break, such as using Alexa Flash Meeting.

**8. Personal Support**

Social isolating or distancing can have an impact on our mental health. For information on self-care and other treatments for mental health issues please see: [https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-their-wellbeing/](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/).

Could you support an intern through this time? Do you have HR policies and services available to them through your company?

The university can also offer personal support. The Professional Pathways team could offer initial support. For more specialist support they may be eligible to access the university’s [Student Wellbeing services](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/) or the [University’s Staff Wellbeing services](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/).

**9. Flexible Working**

If interns wish to change their normal working hours we advise they will need to get permission from you to work ‘flexible working hours’. If you have a policy on this it would be important for the intern to see that too.

**10.** **When to Stop Working**

Where there aren’t the normal prompts to remind us it is the end of the working day, sometimes people will let the work drift on. We remind interns the importance of a work-life balance to remain a happy, motivated and productive intern!