

How to succeed in a remote internship

Best Practice Guide
for students, employers, university academic
advisors, and administrative staff



A deliverable of the project

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR INNOVATION IN DISTANT INTERNSHIPS

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Foreword

Since November 2019, eight European universities have cooperated on the innovative endeavour called the European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions, EPICUR, which belongs to the first generation of the new alliances aimed at developing and implementing a new model for international university cooperation.

One of the goals is to promote diverse types of international internships, including hybrid and virtual ones and to create an offer of internships for our students that will help them to pursue their professional careers in the future.

*The **EPIDI project** developed by the three partners of this alliance (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań in Poland, University of Strasbourg in France, and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany) is a notable example of dealing with the present challenges related to education in a systemic way and to look for different practical tools that will strengthen our community and will help to build sustainable partnerships with different stakeholders, including the employers.*

We are very satisfied to share our primary practical findings with other universities and to start a dialogue with our partners at the European level about the future of students' digital and hybrid internships and related challenges and opportunities.

We would like to warmly thank all who contributed to the development of this guide, including internship supervisors, administrative staff, employers, and students who participated in the surveys.

On behalf of EPIDI Team

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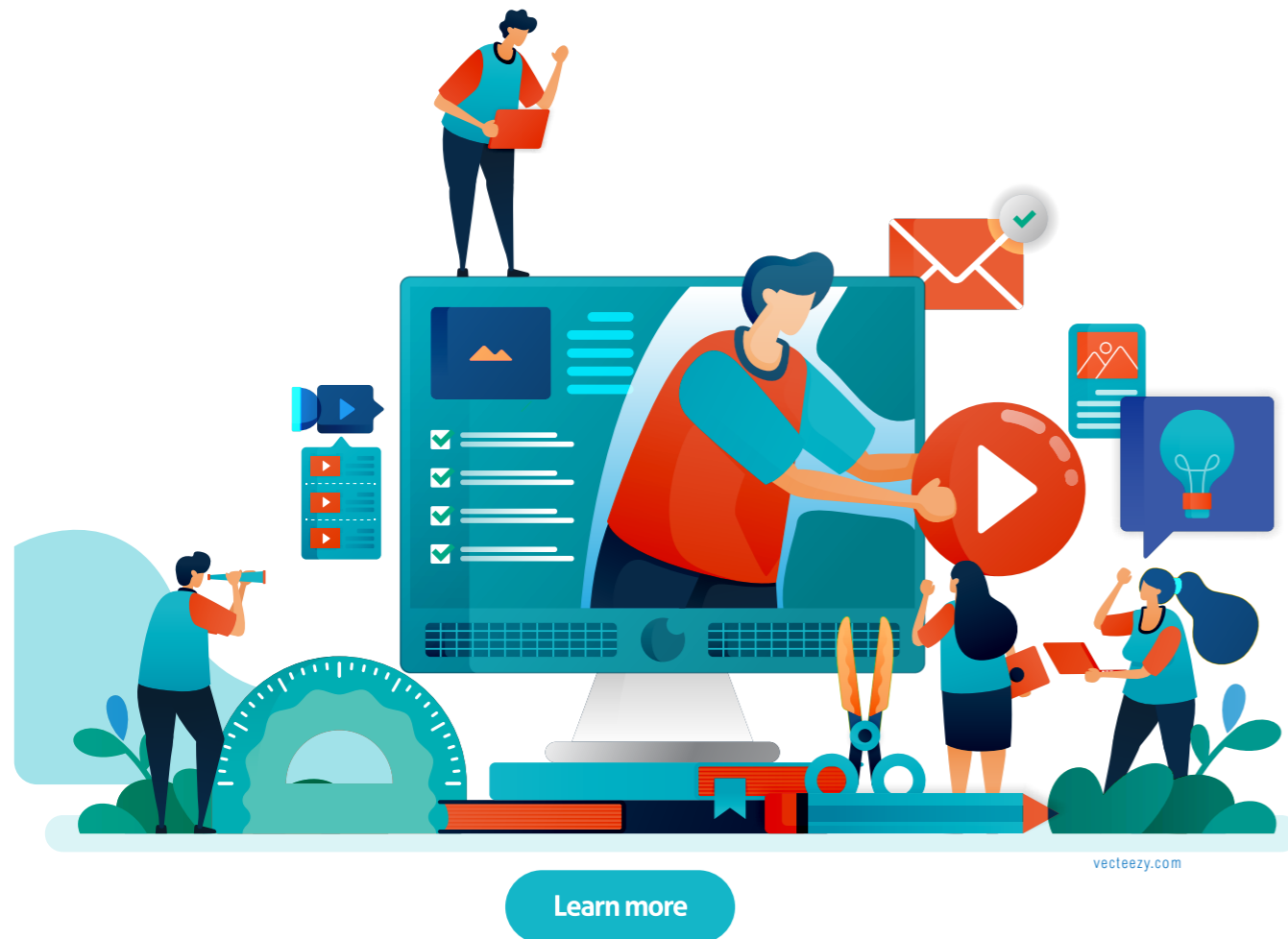
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[Learn more](#)

EPICUR the European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions

EPICUR, the European University Alliance, belongs to the first generation of 17 European Alliances to pilot a new way of intensifying collaboration among Higher Education institutions through the creation of a European University.

Since November 2019, the teams in the 8 founding universities of the alliance have been working together to develop, test and experiment various approaches to make this vision a reality. These include using student centred learning and collaborative teaching formats inspired by a Liberal Arts and Science approach, putting in place service learning and research-based internships closely connected to our regional ecosystems, promoting multilingualism and safeguarding and strengthening European linguistic diversity, and through imagining and facilitating new forms of student mobility (physical, virtual, blended) available within an EPICUR interuniversity campus. In November 2022, the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) will complement our alliance.

EPICUR offers a new model of education and research through innovative programs that were created thanks to our cooperation, with our university partners but also with our students and staff members, and with the help of friends.

Our European university currently consists of three parts:

- EPICUR itself, an ERASMUS+ venture strengthening and connecting regions through a European university and implementing innovative methods of learning and teaching for the European citizens of tomorrow;
- EPICUR Research, developing a common research agenda to improve and strengthen the interaction between science and society as well as empowering early career researchers, and
- EPIDI, our partnership for innovation in distant internships.



About the EPIDI Project

The main focus of the EPIDI project is distant internships at university stressing the identification of best practices, general and specific recommendations, as well as the development of e-learning modules on how to carry out internships efficiently in a distant format with success for all the participants involved: students, academic advisors, employers, and university administrative staff.

In most countries, the 2020 lockdown due to COVID19 forced some students to shift from the traditional to the distant form of internship. This change was sudden and unexpected and left most of the interns unprepared.

The distant internship format puts forward numerous issues to be considered by the groups and individuals involved. Overall, the shift regards the question of how to implement the needed changes into the specific ways of functioning of a given work place: how to organize the daily work in terms of cooperating with the working team, reporting to a supervisor, how to solve the question of mentoring, etc. It is crucial to determine whether and how one will work from home, what virtual and digital tools are best to rely on, how to cope without informal interactions in the work place, how to distribute IT materials and tools, as well as how to acquire and develop the needed skills to operate in remote and hybrid formats. This is to name just the most immediate concerns. Moreover, one needs to meet the specific legal and administrative requirements.

Currently the predictions are that the number of distant internships will increase in the coming years. Therefore, more than ever, this specific format of distant internships urgently needs some guiding principles that may contribute to making it an enriching and rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Based on the best practice recommendations presented in this Guide e-learning modules will be developed by the three consortium members, which address the four aforementioned stakeholders involved in distant internships.

The results of the joint endeavour will be available in English as well as in French, German, and Polish to increase the scope of potential users in the three countries involved and beyond. Furthermore, the results of this cooperation will be disseminated at the European level, e.g., through the European University EPICUR, as well as at the national and regional level.



The EPIDI Project Partners



University of Strasbourg (UNISTRA)



foto: Catherine Schroeder / Université de Strasbourg



foto: Catherine Schroeder / Université de Strasbourg



Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (AMU)



foto: Adrian Wykrota



foto: Adrian Wykrota



Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)



KIT

University of Strasbourg (UNISTRA)

Located in the heart of Europe, the University of Strasbourg has a clear bicultural identity.

The University of Strasbourg is one of the largest universities in France, with more than 56 000 students (international students make up 20%).

The University of Strasbourg offers 60 international degrees in partnership with universities around the world. It is committed to promoting student mobility and has many cooperation agreements with institutions in Europe and beyond. It has developed strong French German cooperation and is now a privileged partner among the Upper Rhine universities.

A genuine proponent of multilingualism and cross-cultural dialogue, the university offers access to 25 modern languages, multinational diplomas, jointly supervised doctorates, upholding renowned international postgraduate schools and student exchange agreements.

The university is involved in 17 Erasmus+ projects including 2 Erasmus Mundus master degrees, 5 Erasmus + strategic partnerships, a knowledge alliance, and a Jean Monnet centre of excellence.

Research is a major asset for the university's international development. Thanks to the worldwide reputation of its research teams, the University of Strasbourg has emerged among Europe's foremost research universities and is a founding member of the League of the European Research Universities (LERU).

Numerous prestigious prizes have been awarded to our world-class researchers, testifying to the quality of the research at the University of Strasbourg, including: 4 Nobel Prizes, 1 Kavli Prize and 21 researchers honoured by the European Research Council since 2008.

More at www.unistra.fr



The UNISTRA EPIDI Strasbourg TEAM



phot. Catherine Schröder

Funda Kerbriand Vignon

EPIDI coordinator at UNISTRA, besides being the general coordinator of EPIDI, she engages a large team composed of different university services around internship challenges and promotion. She also has experience as communication officer and project manager at the University of Strasbourg putting together many innovative approaches to promote students' employability. She is highly qualified in teams' management and training, distance learning and remote work and coaching.



phot. Catherine Schröder

Samira Khemkem

She holds a PhD in American civilization. As a distance learning expert, she is a co-leader of "Investments for the future", Project EAD Unistra on distance learning and the leader of a second "Investments for the future" project on linking universities with SMEs. She was the manager of the Cluster4Smart project co-financed by the ERASMUS+ program (09/01705/2020) and awarded the Good Practice Label by Erasmus+ Agency. The aim of the project was to research, develop, test and finetune a great distance learning experience for the European cluster community.



Nathalie Hillenweck

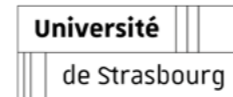
She is associate professor of German in Applied Foreign Languages. She is also currently the Head of Applied Foreign Languages Department at the University of Strasbourg. Her main missions include: development of policies for apprenticeships and work linked training sessions; implementation and structuring of the student entrepreneurial centre and the university's internships; She was head coordinator of the teaching team in charge of the internships in Applied Foreign Languages (LEA) up until 2021.



Renate De La Paix

She has been Head of Studies since 2002 and is Program director of the CAWEB Master (remote and on campus) and the Technical Communication and Localization Master (remote only). In 2002, she created the CAWEB postgraduate program in Web Design and Localization that combines web technologies, localization training, visual communication, and project management. In 2008, an online version of this program was created (now a Master's program) and since 2010, students can study this Master with an apprenticeship contract.

She has experience in supervising interns and apprentices remotely.



The UNISTRA EPIDI Strasbourg TEAM

The UNISTRA EPIDI Strasbourg team



David Lipson

He holds a PhD in American Studies. In 2017 he was recruited as an associate professor of English and head of the distance learning program for Applied Foreign Languages "LEA" at The University of Strasbourg. In 2019 he helped launch the "Unistra IDEX structuration" project as one of the coleaders. In October 2020 he applied for a new IDEX transformation project as project manager. The project aims to create innovative and interactive solutions for the transformation of an oral English course.

The UNISTRA EPIDI Strasbourg TEAM

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (AMU)

AMU is the major academic institution in Poznań and one of the top Polish universities. Its reputation is founded on tradition, the outstanding achievements of the faculty and the attractive curriculum offered to students.

The university was founded in 1919 and currently its student population is nearly 37 000 students (over 1000 are international students), 1300 PhD students. Students may choose between 285 degree courses and 180 possible professional specializations.

In recent years the educational offer has become increasingly diverse. New educational projects include: integrated studies in humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and programs carried out in cooperation with other institutions both in Poland and abroad. Research is carried out at 20 faculties, departments, institutes, and interdisciplinary university centres. Apart from teaching and learning, research is the most important sphere of activity and teaching potential of the university. The university is a centre of academic excellence, where research and teaching are mutually sustaining, and where the context within which research is conducted and knowledge is sought and applied is international as much as regional and national. The university continuously extends and updates research programs and contents of study curricula, with special emphasis on their interdisciplinary and international nature.

Our Priority Research Areas are as follows: Agricultural and Biological Sciences, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology, Chemistry, Materials Science, Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy, Computer Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences.

The mission of the university is to be engaged in advance knowledge through high quality research and teaching in partnership with business, the professions, public services and other research and learning providers.

More at www.amu.edu.pl



The AMU EPIDI Poznań TEAM



foto: Tomasz Siuda

Anna Schmidt-Fiedler

EPIDI coordinator at AMU, works as project and impact manager promoting and fostering the university's engagement with external stakeholders both in education and research, sustainable development, social responsibility. She has also experience as students' mobility and project manager within the framework of different EU and national policies and funds. She is also active in the NGO sector running her own organization Key 4 Tomorrow active in the field of social activism and integration, sustainability, multicultural dialogue.



foto: Adrian Wyrota

Joanna Morawska

holds a PhD in Economics and currently she works as an adjunct at the Faculty of Human Geography and Planning. Her research focuses on the role of universities in regional innovation (eco)systems, the new forms of innovation, including (digital) social innovation. Recently, she has been also exploring the future visions of Society and Industry 5.0 in the context of digital and green twins. She has over eighteen years of experience at various administration positions including project management or international cooperation in the framework of different EU and national policies and funds.



fot. Karolina Majsner

Katarzyna Macedulska

is assistant professor in the Department of American Literature, Faculty of English, at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. She holds a PhD (2010, Cotutelle de thèse: JustusLiebigUniversität Giessen, Germany and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland). Her research focuses on contemporary American literature with a particular focus on memory, trauma, narrative, and autobiographical writing. She has been appointed as an academic advisor monitoring and guiding student internships at the Faculty.



Dorota Pisula

Career advisor, Head of the Career Office at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. Responsible for the university's contacts with the socioeconomic environment, students' extracurricular internships. She is an expert at conferences related to the labour market. She implemented a modern international Job Teaser platform for publishing job offers, internships and apprenticeships at the university. As part of the Career Offices Committee, she conducts activities for the development of Academic Career Offices in Poland. Chairwoman of the Career Offices Committee at The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP).



Adam Przestacki

holds a PhD in Mathematics and currently works at the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science of Adam Mickiewicz University. He is working in the subfield of Functional Analysis called linear dynamics. His research focuses on the dynamic properties of various operators acting on spaces of smooth and holomorphic functions. He is also interested in the Invariant Subspace Problem a long-lasting open problem in operator theory. Moreover, he is a member of the team responsible for organizing and monitoring internships at the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science.



Małgorzata Rosalska

holds a PhD in Education. She is currently working at the Faculty of Educational Studies of AMU in the Department of Lifelong Learning and Career Counselling. She specialises in academic advising, adult education and career guidance. Her research focuses on educational policy and career education. She has many years of experience in implementing research and training projects for educational institutions, non-profit organizations and job market institutions.



Natalia Walter

Professor, is a graduate of media pedagogy (media education), as well as integrated preschool and early school education. She is the chair of the Department of Media Education at the Faculty of Educational Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, a specialist in ICT and media education, social support (mainly online), and e-learning. For several years, she has worked with children and teens as an IT teacher and currently conducts media education workshops for students, teachers, and parents. She is the author of books and articles on new media, ICT education, e-learning, and online social support.

The AMU EPIDI Poznań TEAM



Tomasz Pilka

PhD, assistant professor at the Department of Artificial Intelligence at the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. His research and interests focus on the problems of processing large data sets, dealing with data anomalies and computational intelligence. He has initiated and led the multidimensional cooperation of IT companies with the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science and their participation in the process of educating students. Currently, he cooperates with sports clubs in the area of using machine learning to support their activities.

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)

KIT is “The Research University in the Helmholtz Association.” As one of the biggest science institutions in Europe with about 9.300 employees and 24.300 students, the only German University of Excellence with national large-scale research facilities combines a long university tradition with program-oriented top-level research.

The university world, whose roots date back to 1825, stands for the broad range of disciplines and knowledge, whereas the Helmholtz world traditionally focuses on the big and urgent challenges facing society, science, and industry. In establishing innovative research structures, KIT is pursuing joint strategies and visions. KIT is indeed one of eleven Universities of Excellence in Germany and is devoted to top research and excellent academic education as well as to being a prominent location of academic life, life-long learning, comprehensive advanced training, exchange of know-how, and sustainable innovation culture. On an international level, KIT is involved in 236 H2020 grants, of which it coordinates 38.

At KIT, more than 5000 scientists cooperate in a broad range of disciplines in natural and engineering sciences, economics, the humanities, and social sciences. Irrespective of whether they predominantly work in the research sector or university sector, they all participate in academic education to provide our students with insights that can only be offered by KIT as the Research University in the Helmholtz Association.

More at www.kit.edu



The KIT EPIDI Karlsruhe TEAM



Nadine Berends

EPIDI coordinator at KIT and Regional Cooperations Officer Europe. She joined KIT in 2020, after completing her diploma in European Studies and French-German Cooperation and following different experiences in European cooperation and project management in binational structures and institutions in the Upper Rhine Region. At KIT International affairs, she worked in positions both in the field of education and research.



Michael Zacherle

He has coordinated all activities of EPICUR as a European University at KIT since November 2019, and he is the Primary Coordinator Contact for the H2020-project EPICUR-Research. His duties include the interconnection within and between both those EPICUR projects, as well as all administrative issues. Mr. Zacherle has profound experience in executing change management projects at KIT. He is a KIT Senator entitled to vote since 2015 and a full member of the KIT Senate Board of Issues of Strategy and Governance.



Wiebke Gröschler

She has been the WP5 Leader (regional outreach) since 2020 within the project EPICUR Education affiliated to the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). After graduating at Leuphana University of Lüneburg as a cultural scientist, she worked as a research assistant and lecturer for several years at the Centre for Cultural and General Studies at KIT. From 2009-2018 she was head of an association's international exchange programme for community service in Germany before she coordinated an exchange programme for research internships at KIT (2019).

Introduction

Internships are an excellent opportunity for students to find their dream job and for employers to recruit potential new staff members. That is why they are a win-win endeavour for everyone involved in the process.

For the purpose of this Guide, an **internship** is understood as a period of work experience offered by an employer to give students and graduates exposure to the working environment, often within a specific industry, which relates to their field of study. It is usually established for a fixed period of time and some study programmes require students to carry out an internship in order to validate their degree. Internships may be mandatory or optional, short term, up to 3 months or long term.

Three types of internships are mentioned in the Best Practice Guide:*

- **on site:** the entire activity is situated at a particular place. For instance, working or studying on site usually means working on a given company's premises or in an educational institution;
- **remote:** the entire work for a company or an organisation is conducted in a remote (online) way, i.e., as in working from home;
- **hybrid:** it is a combination of both.

In the current technical environment of increasing digitalisation, the pandemic has created the unexpected reason for many students (through travel constraints and home office instructions) to shift their internships from the traditional in person mode to a distant one. This shift caught most universities by surprise and required ad hoc and pragmatic solutions for unknown challenges and difficulties. But we are convinced, that once implemented, the remote and the hybrid internships will not disappear but rather will continue as an option, even when the pandemic is over. The remote and the hybrid formats create new opportunities, for example, it is easier for employers to find interns and for interns to find employers from all over the world.


However, this situation also poses new challenges and requires advanced skills of navigation, digital literacy, communication, guidance, as well as the new means for the integration of a new team member in a virtual work environment.

The EPIDI project deals with four groups involved in internships: **students, employers, academic advisors, and administrative staff.** Between August and October 2021, a survey was conducted in various European Higher Education Institutions networks, the local or national employer networks as well as in the local, national, and European student networks. We collected data from more than 400 respondents which allowed us to capture their experience, their needs and recommendations in the field of remote and hybrid internships.

What is interesting, the challenges and benefits described by respondents were similar regardless of the country. The hybrid way of conducting internships was suggested as the most beneficial, as it combines the advantages of both an onsite and remote internship.

The Best Practice Guide is divided into four main sections, each devoted to the specific group (as described above).

In each section the main identified **Challenge** are presented; together with the ideas for their **Solution**

We also share the examples of **BEST PRACTICES** and **tips.** 

Finally, **E-Learning Module Recommendations** are suggested.

We hope that the Guide will contribute to a successful experience of students' remote internships.

* Definition from the Mobility Glossary of EPICUR European University, November 2020.

The four target groups – a brief description

A wide range of perspectives, experiences, and reflections was gathered from the representatives of four distinct groups involved in distant internships:

1 STUDENTS

– persons who study at a university or other place of higher education.

2 EMPLOYERS

– companies, institutions or organizations from various sectors that host students within their internships.

3 ACADEMIC ADVISORS

– who look after the smooth and efficient process of the internship. They make sure that students undertake a professional experience in coherence with their study program. They often stay in contact with the employers.

4 ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

– (mainly the personnel of careers offices) who facilitate the process of networking at the university level: they connect students with employers. Also, they are responsible for providing courses and training sessions on soft and hard/digital skills; they monitor the trends on the changing labour markets and closely follow the employers' expectations.

The involvement and role of these two groups differ depending on the particular country: in France, their involvement is more visible in the entire process, whereas in Poland and Germany it is rather minor.

On the following pages you will find the results and conclusions of the surveys and the interviews conducted among the four groups involved in distant internships.

The findings of the surveys and the interviews are presented in the form of challenges, recommended solutions, and tips.

STUDENTS

A total of 254 answers from students were received and 11 individual interviews were collected. The respondents were mainly students from the University of Strasbourg, the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Utrecht University, and the University of Limerick.

During the 2020/2021 academic year, 31% of UNISTRA students, 50% of AMU students, 50% of KIT students and 50% of other University students did their internship remotely. 69% UNISTRA students and the other 50% students from the different universities did a hybrid internship.

In the surveys and interviews responding students pointed out the following challenges:

- relational
- technical
- motivational
- psychological / emotional
- organizational (e.g how to organize and manage your work)

and benefits of remote / hybrid internships:

- development of organizational skills
- adaptability
- autonomy
- technical and digital skill development.



Designed by pch.vector / Freepik

Challenge 1

Searching for internship and job opportunities is not easy and filling in the required application documents is sometimes even worse.

Students often do not know how to search for remote or hybrid internships; they are not familiar with the tools that enable them to successfully apply for internships. Therefore, the main challenges for students are posed by networking, finding the offer(s), and tailoring their application to a specific job offer or an internship slot. This challenge is also linked to insufficient training on how to prepare résumés and cover letters.

Moreover, students are frequently unaware of the very fact that there is a possibility to do their internships in the remote or hybrid modes. As such, they do not include these possibilities in their searches and therefore an important array of options they could choose their internship offer(s) from is lost.

Solution 1

Trainings sessions with instructions on how to conduct job searches and, prepare application documents résumés and cover letters.

The idea is to help students work on their soft skills and remote collaboration tools in the process of applying for a remote internship. It would also be useful to create a database of hybrid and remote internships offered together with networking opportunities and events that include promotion of particular companies/possible internship places and vacant positions. Employers should be encouraged to specify the format of the internship: whether it is 'on site', 'hybrid,' or 'remote.'

The skill training should also entail all necessary information regarding application procedures and the handling of administrative documents that are mandatory for the internship to be legally framed.

Quotes:

- *It's not easy to find an interesting internship.*
- *I didn't know where to find remote internships for myself.*
- *It's so great to work away from the office. I don't waste my time and money on commuting.*
- *I can adapt my work place to my needs in a more convenient way than at work.*



Are you looking for an internship, also a remote or hybrid internship, but don't know where to start? Follow the tips below!

- ➔ Check offers at your faculty, on your faculty's website. That's a given!
- ➔ Don't forget about LinkedIn, Indeed...
- ➔ Networking can do wonders. Don't be afraid of asking your colleagues, fellow students, friends, family... they might know just the right path for you to follow!

- ➔ Enroll to courses or check e-learning modules helping to properly prepare for job interview(s)
- ➔ Before deciding where to do your hybrid or remote internship make sure that the organization you have chosen will enable you to achieve your goals
- ➔ Enrol the courses or check e-learning modules on business etiquette and manners

BEST PRACTICES

Kolba Lab project.

<https://kolba.am/connecting-students-and-employers/>

the "Contact Students" platform, a tool for bridging employers and new graduates or final year students. The tool has two main types of users. Employers will be able to locate the human resources they need, while also delegating some small-scale thematic researchers to students from relevant faculties. Students will be able to see potential employers and be able to connect with them, aiding their job search but also benefit by accessing an inventory of practically grounded study projects.

Students will have the opportunity to later publish their final projects on the platform, thus increasing their visibility for potentially interested employers.

– **How to search for a remote internship?**

<https://medium.com/the-faculty/how-to-find-remote-internships-cef172b815a0>

(Source: medium.com)

– **How to write an internship cover letter?**

<https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/cvs-cover-letters/internship-cover-letter>

(Source: Indeed)

– **How to write a CV for an internship?**

<https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/cvs-cover-letters/internship-cv-examples>

(Source: Indeed)

– **10 best skills to include on a CV:**

<https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/cvs-cover-letters/best-cv-skills>

(Source: Indeed)

– **6 universal rules for writing your CV:**

<https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/cvs-cover-letters/6-universal-rules-for-writing-your-cv>

(Source: Indeed)

– **How to prepare your remote internship interview?**

<https://careerup.com/career-advice/career-coaching/online-internships-prepare-for-a-video-interview/>

(Source: Careerup.com)

The IT sphere was chosen as the priority during the first phase of the platform development, engaging large IT companies and students pursuing relevant degrees in the sector.

Courses on writing résumés/CVs and cover letters are inspiring and worth recommending, as well as ones on cover letters and job interview simulations given either at universities (classes are taught by their teachers and/or by career officers or staff at the university when their study program does not include classes on training for professional applications) or by professional online tutorials.

Below are links you can follow, in order to prepare efficiently prior to the start of your internship.

If you've never had the chance of benefiting from opportunities to simulate job interviews, here are some suggestions:



Challenge 2

Collecting and completing the necessary documentation.

Internship agreements are usually quite complex to grasp, nevertheless, they constitute the basic legal framework for internships and that is why they are so important. This represents a challenge for students especially when they apply for the first time and when they are not trained in legal matters, have never entered an agreement, or signed a contract. It gets even more complex when the student's employer is in a different country and thus most probably is subject to different legal framework.

Therefore, it is particularly important to introduce the specificities and legislation of remote internships done in the home country or abroad. Students are also often lost in the process of collecting and filling in the required documents that need to be signed in order to complete the internship; they often do not know what the internship report should contain.

Solution 2

Providing a roadmap for collecting and completing the documents necessary for an internship (administrative paperwork).

Providing students with relevant information and documents to be filled out in advance would help them navigate the administrative process and regulate the relationship with university staff who oversee internship agreements and legal matters. All relevant links should be included in the toolbox.

Students have also expressed the need for training on legal matters listed above, in order to have all the necessary information regarding their internship before it starts. The roadmap mentioned above could also contain the documents that students have to provide to the university so that they know right at the outset of their internship that they have to fill in and return particular documents, such as: the internship agreement, the evaluation sheet, the attestation of internship and/or the internship report or others.

Quotes:

- *Receiving the required documents at the end of the internship was a huge problem for me.*
- *Using only pdfs instead of exchanging papers makes life so easier!*



You obtained a remote or hybrid internship! Congratulations! The hardest part is behind you! Now what? Here is a checklist of all the steps you need to take in order for your internship to start on the right foot.

- ➔ Ask your employer about the documents you need to fill in at the beginning, during or after your internship

- ➔ Remember to ask if a PDF or electronic version of these documents are sufficient
- ➔ Ask about the way you should submit these documents: personally, by email or maybe via a shared platform

BEST PRACTICES

A European project called SPRINT, which has the objective to Standardize Best Practices in the field of internships, did research on employment, internships and traineeships insurance in European Union Countries:

https://www.sprint-erasmusplus.fr/sites/sprint-erasmusplus.fr/files/Appendix%201%20-%20employment%2C%20internships%20and%20traineeships%20insurance%20in%20EU_VF.pdf

This very clear and complete document from the SPRINT Team, which the student can rely on, contains all the specificities regarding the legal framework concerning internships regulations and insurance for interns organized per country that are part of the European Union. Thus, European students that want to do an internship can rely on this resource to get to know what documents are required.

POZENA, a Polish translation company, simplified and arranged recruitment procedures in a very student friendly way:

Candidate's involvement in the active recruitment process:

mandatory participation in an online webinar or viewing of a webinar video where we present the concept of the philological internship: we outline the history of the programme and our philosophy, present the outline of the internship programme, discuss the recruitment

procedure and rules, answer possible questions in a Q&A session and give the floor to our former interns who share their authentic impressions from the internship period.

Recruitment questionnaire:

After the webinar, candidates receive a questionnaire to fill in, in which they provide basic personal data, express their expectations from the internship, declare their competences (including language competences), determine the level of motivation and choose a convenient time for the internship from among those currently available. The questionnaire replaces the CV and cover letter.

Interview:

After completing the questionnaire, candidates receive an invitation to an online interview. They choose the date themselves according to their preferences using an interactive calendar that updates in real time. The interview is usually prompted by the completed questionnaire. The candidate also has the opportunity to ask questions. During the interview, a specific internship date is confirmed.

Signing formal contracts:

those selected for specific groups receive internship contracts to sign. The first guarantees them a place on the internship. The second guarantees the provision of computer equipment for the duration of the internship (internships are currently only offered remotely). Contracts are signed electronically through a dedicated platform that certifies the authenticity of signatures.



Challenge 3**Specificities of remote or hybrid internships are not always obvious.**

Students have emphasized their concern about insufficient knowledge of remote or hybrid internships: they were not aware of the specifics of these kinds of internships before they began working.

Indeed, remote or hybrid internships have upsides and downsides that students need to know about before starting their internships.

Students described positive aspects of remote collaboration: concentration, efficiency, saving time, acquiring/developing their autonomy and sense of responsibility, management. Some of them also mentioned negative feedback about their remote or hybrid experiences such as feeling isolated, a loss of motivation and interest in their tasks, being or feeling overwhelmed, being bullied, feeling depressed and not being able to maintain a good work life balance. These are important issues for one's personal wellbeing and need to be specifically addressed.

Solution 3**Training sessions and workshops raising awareness about the specificities of remote and hybrid internships.**

Students need to prepare differently for a remote or hybrid internship than for a traditional one. Therefore, before choosing to have a remote working experience, students have to be aware of the specificities of this internship format, whether it is done 100 % remotely or in a hybrid mode. In fact, remote or hybrid internships can be an incredibly positive experience, but they also entail many challenges.

The awareness about the pros and cons could be achieved by especially tailored meetings at the university where the issues and problems that might occur could be discussed with the students. Also, some preparatory workshops and training sessions on different sets of skills and competences are strongly recommended.

A focus should be set on wellbeing issues too - students need to know which problems may occur - such as isolation and lack of motivation - and how to overcome them with special training sessions and individual strategies.

Quotes:

- *I had a problem contacting my employer and organizing my work.*
- *I had more work because I didn't spend my time on commuting, which resulted in problems keeping the right balance between the private and the professional life.*
- *I suffered from a constant lack of motivation.*
- *It was difficult for me not to have a direct access to the company's tutor/authority. Sometimes I lacked motivation. I also felt forgotten by my co-workers.*
- *I felt less involved in the required work. It was also difficult for me not being able to freely contact my co-workers in the hosting institution, not getting a real feel of what working there was like.*



You have found your internship and are ready for a new professional adventure? Here are some tips to help you conduct and complete it successfully:

- ➔ Before starting your internship familiarise yourself with the culture of the company where you will do your internship. Find out as much as possible about the place, the customs, the rules.
- ➔ Create a proper work environment at home (equipment, isolated space, convenient desk, etc.).
- ➔ Remember about the camera! Use a relevant dress code when talking to your peers online.

- ➔ Try to stay in touch with your colleagues, share your experience, do not be afraid of asking questions or asking for advice.
- ➔ Be organized, prepare week and day plans and to do lists, maintain your internship schedule, meet your deadlines and do not be late to work meetings.
- ➔ Make sure you have the right equipment and access to the platforms or applications which you will use during the internship.
- ➔ Ask questions! Discuss your doubts with your internship tutor at the beginning. Determine which goals are possible to achieve in the remote or hybrid form.

BEST PRACTICES

Adam Mickiewicz University solutions:

“Preparation for professional internships” class has been introduced in the study curriculum (15 hours). The aim of the course is to develop competences in designing internship objectives, learning through experience, getting to know the organizational culture of companies.

At the Faculty of Educational Studies of UAM there is a course “Designing educational and professional paths” The classes are obligatory for undergraduate students. Their aim is to develop proactive attitudes towards one's own career resources. Students develop competencies in planning and implementing an individual career development project.

At KIT a team of students and employees work on the project **Myhealth** to ensure that health is in the centre of student's attention throughout their studies.

They also provide concrete offers to help, when problems occur, see:

<https://www.myhealth.kit.edu/index.php/angebote/>

This can be easily transferred to the challenges of a remote/hybrid internship.

Challenge 4

Communication and integration problems; limited direct availability of interns' supervisors and workmates.

Efficient and successful communication is always demanding, but in an online and/or hybrid format it seems to be even more challenging and requires the adequate approach and skills. When the direct interpersonal contact is severely limited, students often complain about the insufficient quality of communication within employers' teams on every stage of the internship:

- before it starts, insufficient information was given regarding the assigned tasks, the working hours, the material and tools required, the contact in case of a problem;
- during the internship, the unavailability of their supervisors or other contact persons on the employer's side, and of the academic advisors as well;
- after the internship some reservations were raised regarding the feedback and evaluation procedures.

In times of increasing globalization, the online/hybrid internship format creates new opportunities to work abroad in intercultural environments and, as a result of today's conditions, intercultural communication emerges as a challenge as well.

Also, the issue of integration of interns into a team needs more attention: the aspect of natural and unforced contact during formal occasions in the offices and informal spaces such as canteens or common commuting, is missing. If not properly integrated, students do not feel like they are proper team members. They may feel isolated and frustrated, having problems in identifying with the host institution, its mission and goals, but also in the very immediate practical way, while completing the tasks they were given within their internship.

To sum up, the insufficient level of communication combined with the feeling of not being integrated generates frustrations and has a negative impact on the students' motivation and the sheer perception of the students' internships as a whole.

Quotes:

- *I only had email contact with my employer, which often resulted in many misunderstandings.*
- *I missed the direct contact with people, I didn't feel like I was participating in an internship, I felt so isolated.*
- *I had problems with immediate responses from my supervisors I waited for hours; in an onsite internship I would have to just to knock at his door.*
- *It was difficult for me to improve my work because I didn't get a lot of feedback.*
- *I didn't feel integrated with the team.*



Solution 4.1

Setting communication framework, methods, and frequency for the entire internship.

A meeting between the employer, student (and academic advisor when applicable) should be organized at the beginning of the internship where the skills the student needs to acquire in order to complete his course work as well as the necessary documents s/he has to complete are determined. Tasks, working hours, materials/tools required, and means of contact, especially with the supervisors should be defined. This arrangement should also settle the matter of the frequency and method of the intern's supervision and the feedback rules on his/her performance. Flexibility and adjusting to the specific needs of both the intern and the employer as well as securing the availability of the employer's representatives when necessary are highly recommended and will allow students to do their tasks smoothly and without obstacles.

Also, courses on codes of behaviour, decorum, and rules of etiquette with the emphasis on intercultural communication should be provided, especially for institutions working in multicultural environments.

Solution 4.2

Participating in integration activities for students at the beginning and during the internship.

The host institutions often provide integration activities and modules at the beginning and during the internship, so that the students know they are members of a team.

Some of them are conducted online, some of them in person. It is definitely worth joining them. A good option is to propose common solutions that are practiced elsewhere.



Efficient communication and proper integration into the team are crucial for your internship – here are some tips on this matter:

- ➔ Remain flexible.
- ➔ Set communication framework. Do not hesitate to ask your employer to be specific. You can set framework and schedule together: specify the frequency and the means of communication.

- ➔ Identify your preferred contact person at the hosting institution. This person will be your guide, your "go to" in case questions arise (as they always do). Ask for this person's email and phone number and don't forget to introduce yourself!
- ➔ Ask about integration activities available at your employer's institution. This is a great way to get to know your co-workers and to get a good grasp of how your hosting institution functions.

BEST PRACTICES

How can interns themselves take the first crucial steps towards setting up good communication with their employer?

Here are 7 tips for interns on how to initiate good communication, so as to integrate the hosting institution properly, with the support of their employer:

<https://www.theinterngroup.com/our-blog/tips-for-good-communication/>

(Source: theinterngroup.com)

Challenge 5**Acquiring soft skills and networking competences crucial for remote and hybrid internships.**

Students should be aware that remote work requires specific forms of behaviour, which are not immediately obvious when one compares them with the expected manners in the regular onsite conditions. First, students working remotely need to remain available at and during the scheduled hours. They need to know how to effectively communicate in a remote setting, where the use of body language is curtailed.

Remote work also requires strong organizational skills: students need to be able to plan their work, prioritize their tasks, structure their data, sustain order in their files and documents; maintain their goals in clear sight, as well as keep track of their work process. As such, familiarity with organization tools is hugely beneficial.

Networking is a substantial part of professional life yet students sometimes do not really know how to expand and/or maintain it.

Students encounter problems integrating their professional network even though they have had enriching experiences during their internships. They do not know how to put their experiences forward, whether it means the ways of including it on their CV or how to display it on their professional social media sites such as e.g., LinkedIn.

Furthermore, when the internship is done remotely, it proves to be even more complicated for students to put forward and develop their experience and newly acquired abilities as well as how to extend their professional network.

Solution 5.1**Training sessions and workshops on interpersonal soft skills developing appropriate behaviours and habits for a better insertion into the labour market.**

Internships are often the student's first steps into the labour market and thus into the "active" and "professional" world; hence, students definitely need to learn about the soft skills required when entering this new context, especially when the remote internship is the student's first experience of a workplace.

Students are expected to be committed and stay active as well as develop the skill planning tasks ahead of time (skill of future oriented awareness). Some training in techniques that help minimize stress and thus enable them to carry out the duties in a more efficient way would also be beneficial. Also, to practice a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability to the changing circumstances and arising directives is recommended. Finally, students need to nurture their motivation and show their dedication and engagement to their employers.

Solution 5.2**Training sessions and workshops helping students create their professional network.**

To help students create and/or maintain their professional network optimized would require meetings and workshops with university career officers and professional career advisors. This would help students to determine their work related goals and manage their professional careers as well. Also, some workshops should be offered on how to communicate professional profile and achievements on social media.



Social and soft skills are as important as hard, professional ones – find some helpful tips below:

- ➔ Reliably assess your soft skills. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will allow you to realistically assess in which areas it is worth taking care of their development.
- ➔ Be open to feedback. Even if it is critical, it can be very helpful to design areas for further development.
- ➔ During hybrid and remote internships, interpersonal communication is especially important! You will do a lot of things via emails and videoconferences. Make sure you know netiquette well.
- ➔ If you feel that you are failing, that you are experiencing difficulties in teamwork, communication, activity planning, discuss this with your internship supervisor on a regular basis. Deal with difficult issues right away!
- ➔ Don't be afraid of challenges! After all, an internship is a learning opportunity. Learn, solve problems, ask questions. However, if you're really struggling with something, ask your internship supervisor for help or advice. He or she is there to help you make the most of your time here and learn new things.

- ➔ Consciously build your brand. Demonstrate your competences and qualifications.
- ➔ Take care of the right image in social media. Make sure that the information presented there is true and up to date.
- ➔ Take advantage of the opportunities offered by networking. Conferences, seminars, industry meetings are an excellent opportunity to enter the professional environment.
- ➔ Ask your employer for a recommendation letter! What competences and skills have you developed? What have you brought to your hosting institution? No one is better placed than your employer to answer this question for your next experience, so ask your hosting institution for a recommendation letter.
- ➔ Put forward your new competences on your professional networks profile and/or in a beautiful post! #InternshipDone In 2022 social media's power is not to be underestimated, find the right words to put forward your new competences and skills. Don't forget to mention the #hashtags and @usernames of your hosting institution.

BEST PRACTICES**Adam Mickiewicz University solutions:**

Courses on the following subject areas are offered: interpersonal communication, mediation, negotiation, work and cooperation in intercultural teams. These courses are either obligatory or optional. They are oriented towards the development of core competences regardless of the field of study.

There are also specialized courses that are designed by AMU Career Office to help develop soft skills. Moreover, educational or industry fairs are thought of as a way to facilitate networking, to present the current internship offers and the expectations of employers.

AMU also provides other platforms for the students to rely on; these are often more faculty based and faculty managed.

For instance, the Faculty of English has created a platform for the students – Meetings with AMU alumni – where former students visit the faculty and talk about their career path and how they made it as well as discuss the character of their work and other aspects of their work-related activities.

Specialist support is also offered at AMU for students who have poor social skills, difficulties with social interaction and/or functioning in a group. Psychological and therapeutic support is offered.

KIT solution:

Online communication requires a special netiquette The Zentrum für Mediales Lernen at KIT developed a hand-out on netiquette in online learning, available under:

https://www.zml.kit.edu/downloads/Netiquette_in_der_Online-Lehre.pdf

Challenge 6**Mastering digital work tools necessary for remote and hybrid internships.**

It is easier to post on social media than to effectively communicate online. Although most of us are familiar with virtual environments we use various social media platforms and we communicate electronically in everyday matters when it comes to efficient managing, collaborating, and communicating online, it often turns out that the potential of digital tools remains unrevealed to students during their internships. A certain degree of fluency in using digital work tools is necessary in carrying out a remote/hybrid internship. Even more so, since the used digital tools are often quite specific to a given host institution.

Moreover, one needs to remember the prominent issue of sensitive data protection while distributing, exchanging, and managing work documents online: through mails, shared platforms, etc. Therefore, students should be aware that remote work is conducted with the use of specific tools and organization to secure a safe and efficient work experience.

Solution 6**Introductory courses on digital communication and management tools that are used at the host institution for remote work.**

The host institution should take the time to train the interns on the specific digital tools the employer uses for efficient communication and cooperation. It embraces the means of communication and software such as videoconferencing websites and apps (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Google Drive and other tools provided by universities or host institutions), management tools, as well as software and shared platforms specific to the host institutions. The fact is that tools that students use by themselves or at the university will not necessarily be the same ones that the host institution relies on.

Creation of a toolbox in order to gather all relevant means and useful tools in one place easy to access is also recommended. Moreover, a special training session on sensitive data handling (secret companies' data, personal data etc.) should be provided.

Quotes:

- *The app for making external phone calls didn't work.*
- *I had to do film editing as a task but my computer was too weak.*
- *Students have problems with digital tools, modern technologies with remote contact (employer).*
- *A major issue was human contact with my colleagues, some of them were not familiar with Zoom etc.*
- *Having the everyday motivation...*
- *Technical troubleshooting is a nightmare!*

BEST PRACTICES

The German Hochschulforum für Digitalisierung published a collection of digital tools for different purposes in remote learning and teaching under:

<https://hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/en/blog/tools-collection>

It gives a good overview of tools that can be used for remote internships.

Moreover, various projects about virtual mobility, with tips on how to use digital communication and management tools, such as Erasmus without Paper exist. See:

<https://erasmuswithoutpaper.eu/about>

During the pandemic, digital learning agreements were established, which facilitate for instance funding of internships.



- ➔ Revision or preparation for remote collaboration!

Ready, steady, GO!

Here are the most common tools and platforms used for remote collaboration by most universities or companies. They almost all work the same. They are all free, or they have free trials, or they are provided freely by your university.

So, pick one, try and learn!

1. Planification and organisation:

- Google Agenda
- Beesbusy
- Notion
- Moodle

2. Communication:

- Slack
- Microsoft Teams
- Skype
- Moodle

3. Team work:

- Google Drive
- Microsoft Teams
- Moodle

4. Online meetings:

- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Skype

5. Taking notes:

- Google docs
- Word
- Notes
- sticky notes



EMPLOYERS

EMPLOYERS

Employers, alongside with students, are the indispensable participants of remote/ hybrid internships. In total, 43 questionnaires and 15 detailed interviews were conducted in this group.

The respondents are representatives of entrepreneurial support organizations, civil society organizations, businesses, public administration.

The companies/institutions operate in various sectors: ICT/IT, language service, industrial sector (electronic, automobile, manufacturing, additive fabricators, metalworking industry), early education, education and research sector, agrobusiness and banking sector.

Employers did not have problems with precisely defining benefits of remote/ hybrid internships. To quote just a few:

- Much better time organization, no need to use office premises every day
- There is the potential to recruit more interns at the same time as they don't use the office space
- We can offer remote internships to students all over the country from different universities

There were also challenges and obstacles mentioned within this group, which are described in more details below.



Designed by katemangostar / Freepik

Challenge 7

Successfully integrating students into the company and working environment.

The employers indicated that working fully in remote mode, especially at the beginning of the student's career, can result in developing bad work habits and a weaker work commitment as it proves quite difficult to integrate students with the company culture and work environment or build close relations with co-workers at a physical distance. Running a traineeship program in hybrid or remote mode for many turns out to be not as effective as running one onsite. This mainly concerns the implementation phase, when trainees must assimilate quite a substantial amount of knowledge during the initial training.

This introductory instruction course is best done onsite in order to clearly explain the complexities of particular tasks, to show/demonstrate at least some of the ways that work is conducted and to inform students about some solutions to obstacles and potential problems. Another aspect of managing an internship is related to harmonizing the timetable of the university and the student's obligations at the university with those related to their internship.



Quotes:

- *Interns didn't feel integrated in the team.*
- *We struggle with difficulties in team building and culture integration.*
- *It is extremely difficult to have interns adapt to company culture without, at least partial, physical presence.*

Solution 7

Providing integration activities for students at the outset and during their internships.

The host institution provides integration activities and modules at the beginning and during the internships, so that the students experience team affiliation.

This integration could be carried out online or on the company's premises. Whichever method is chosen, it is especially important for students to go through this integration phase, as it substantially affects their internships performance and its perception by both the students themselves and their employers alike. This integration would improve the student's position in the team.





How can you integrate interns doing a remote internship into your institution?

- ➔ Plan a very first private online meeting with your intern (and his/her academic internship advisor).
- ➔ The objective of this meeting is to get to know your intern and her/his study program better. It is also to know what this internship that you offer to him/her can bring her/him in terms of competencies, practical hard and soft skills, and what the intern is able to contribute to your company.
- ➔ Organize an online meeting with your team to welcome and present your new super intern.
- ➔ Teleworking is not easy when you don't have interpersonal contact, but it is even more difficult when your colleagues don't know about you and your tasks!
- ➔ Present your intern on your institution's social media!
- ➔ More and more companies are introducing their beloved interns to the world on social media. That reinforces her/his sense of belonging, encourages her/him to give her/his best.



Furthermore, your intern starts to create her/his own network. It is a win-win for everybody!

- ➔ Fix regular online or physical meetings to check on your intern, to monitor and to give feedback on her/his work.
- ➔ Teleworking can bring some negative feelings as ineffectiveness, burnout, isolation, or even depression. However, if you check regularly on your intern to see if she/he is doing fine and if the amount of the tasks and the tasks themselves are feasible.

You have never welcomed an intern in your company before? Then these 6 tips will surely help you to prepare perfectly your future intern's experience:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/6-ways-to-be-a-great-boss-to-your-intern>

(Source: themuse.com)



BEST PRACTICES

POZENA, a Polish translation agency, decided to implement such solutions improving intern's integration with the team:

Tasks that integrate: Tasks are chosen so that interns divide half the time between working on their own and half on interacting with employees (chat, two-person video chat, videoconference in a larger group).

Internship supervisor: Each intern has an administrative internship supervisor who takes care of all the formalities related to the internship: contracts, transfer of equipment, attendance schedule, certification of completion of the internship, etc. Each intern also has a substantive internship supervisor who provides support during the daily language tasks. In addition, each intern has access to the IT Difficulties Channel, where they can report any hardware or software malfunctions.

Integration channel: Interns complete their internships in groups of several people. They have the opportunity to exchange experiences in this IT channel specially prepared for this purpose, to which no permanent employee has access.

Meetups (in testing phase): meetings in the evening over the proverbial glass of wine, which allow you to talk casually about company topics. Find out what is happening behind the scenes. As part of these meetings, we also offer team building games, such as 'Dark Tales'.

Wunderman Thompson Technology, Poland

Providing integration in the office is great, as it is a fantastic way to see each other face to face even for a few hours, but remote integrations are also held. During those, team members can play online games together or even some board games that are modified so that they can be played remotely.

Those kinds of integrations are quite large events, but there is always a time for smaller integrations that are spread over time. It's always good to start team meetings with some ice-breaker activities, that can help with creating a tight community, as people will learn more about themselves. It's also a great idea to create a space for conversations that aren't about a job, but private lives, hobbies or just joking. Even the simple hello/goodbye chat can be a way of integrating interns into the team – as it builds a sense of belonging and not being at work alone.

There is also a special kind of meeting, that focuses on just one person, who will make a presentation. This selected presenter will answer some generic questions like: What do you do after work? Where would you like to live? What kind of music do you like? Etc. Every week another person from the team is selected. This helps in building relationships between people, it's also a great opportunity for the interns to talk about them to the others, make friends.

Examples of these integration games:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/online-energizers/>

<https://www.mural.co/blog/online-warm-ups-energizers>

<https://www.funretrospectives.com/category/energizer/>

Remote party integration:

<https://garticphone.com>

<https://skribbl.io>

<https://www.horsepaste.com>



Challenge 8

Overcoming communication difficulties.

Digital communication is not only about email exchange. Remote internships tend to suffer from insufficient interaction and are not conducive to forming valuable connections with peers and co-workers.

A distinct set of tools is required here that will facilitate the full process of preparing, implementing, conducting, supervising, and evaluating hybrid or digital internships. For some companies, technical problems are also a serious drawback in that they rely on particular software and/or some specific programs.



The best strategy as an employer is to remain available to answer your intern's questions and to express your needs and expectations clearly towards him or her to avoid misunderstandings.

So, how do you overcome communication problems with your intern?

Well, here are some tips and tools that employers can use!

- ➔ Organising regular online meetings or phone calls to check on your intern.
- ➔ Teleworking can bring some negative feelings as ineffectiveness, burnout, isolation, or even depression.

However, do check regularly on your intern to see if she/he is doing fine and if the amount of the tasks and the tasks themselves are feasible.

Solution 8

Creating communication framework with interns and university partners (when applicable) and developing a shared toolbox and digital platforms.

Setting communication framework – frequency, tools, people involved will support effective cooperation with the interns. To inform and properly discuss the student's study program, the skills and competencies that they must apply or learn during their internship, the first meeting between the employer (the academic internship advisor when applicable) and the student, prior to his hiring as an intern is more than recommended. Getting in touch with the academic internship advisor would also be the occasion to create links with the student's university and to promote internships and collaboration between the two parties for future common projects.

Using shared toolboxes and exchange platforms will facilitate multidimensional communication, also with university partners, and will allow the parties involved to monitor progress better and to update concrete issues and solutions. Such a platform, with contact data of employers and university academic advisors, can also be a way to attract more employers and to engage them in the learning and teaching processes.

- ➔ Put in place a schedule with your intern to avoid miscommunication!
- ➔ Organize informal meetings/breaks: Who said coffee breaks cannot be done online?! Keep your intern close and organize informal meetings/breaks! Working together is also having a good time together as a team in a peaceful atmosphere and a positive working environment.

Quotes:

- *Students definitely need to have digital and online communication skills.*
- *Decent work organisation, fluent communication, reliability, flexibility and fast adaptation to new work tools are necessary.*
- *Project communication takes more dedicated effort online than it does onsite.*

BEST PRACTICES

POZENA, a Polish translation agency decided to implement such solutions improving everyday communication:

Reception of computer equipment:

A meeting at the office takes place 3 days before the internship starts. The reception of the computer equipment is an opportunity for a face-to-face conversation.

Hardware installation support:

1-2 days before the internship starts, we check the correct installation of the computer hardware and also connect the computer to the company intranet. We also assign all required licences. This allows the intern to use all company resources provided.

Instructional videos:

We dedicate the first three days of the internship to training. This is mandatory for everyone, as it guarantees the success of the internship. Interns will learn how to use the basic software and familiarise themselves with the types of tasks they will be asked to perform during the internship. Each video is followed by an online meeting with the creator of the video to answer questions and clarify any doubts. All the information provided during the training is necessary, as all the knowledge is used in practice during the following days. The videos and instructions are available throughout the internship.

Microsoft Teams:

Communication is based on the well-known Microsoft solution. Interns become members of individual Teams and have access to the necessary Channels. Verbal communication always takes place with webcams on. Chat communication is carried out in accordance with company rules, which guarantee its effectiveness. One of the tutorial videos is dedicated to the platform itself.

Serious tasks:

We offer the students tasks that are genuinely necessary and an essential part of our linguistic projects. We invite them into the real business world, not into a lab to ride horses, not to watch Westerns. For more ambitious students, we have assignments that go beyond the basic internship programme, such as support with audio-visual projects, website translation or interpreting services.

Return of computer equipment:

Students bring the equipment back to the office at the end of their internship. All formalities related to the internship take place on the same day. We certify the completion of the internship in the Internship Logbook. Students will also receive a prepared reference.

Wunderman Thompson Technology, Poland

Chats and canals created for the employees that go into a few distinct categories. Some of them are purely informational, for companywide announcements. Some focus on specific communities, both formal and informal, like for example cat lovers, or people interested in frontend technologies. Everyone is welcome to join those communities and there are plenty to choose from. Most of the communication is, however, held on the chats created for the projects. Here teammates can talk with each other about the tasks they are doing, ask for help if there is a problem.

We have a few rules regarding interns' availability – as many of them are working only half time and in many cases their university schedule is different for each day. The recommended minimum number of hours to spend at work at one time is 4 hours. We also have so called "core hours" – in which most of the employees are working. When the intern is not available in those basic core hours, they should put in the calendar in which hours they will work, for example 9-12, 15-18. Thanks to this, the team to which the intern belongs can plan their meetings so that everyone can attend.

Challenge 9**Mentoring and supervising the interns.**

Mentoring interns in a remote internship requires special competences and structures.

Compared to a traditional internship onsite, mentoring is more demanding. Students complain that they tend to lack interaction with their supervisor in the host institution while working remotely. Often tasks are not clearly defined from the beginning, so interns are not able to fulfil the expectations and easily lack motivation.

Solution 9**Creating a complete mentoring plan.**

From the beginning things like workload, work equipment, tasks and organisational aspects should be clarified. Interns need regular meetings with not only the supervisor, but the whole team, even more when working remotely. The issue of monitoring and feedback is crucial as it allows the interns to react quickly, to improve constantly, and to gain new experience skills and competences. The employer should especially highlight/certify the intern's hard and soft skills, how the tasks, problems, and challenges were handled, so that the students are aware of their true potential but also their current competences. This evaluation can take the form of a recommendation letter, an evaluation sheet, or a descriptive certificate that would provide a list of all the skills developed by the interns during their remote or hybrid experience. Such feedback would help the students to identify what they need to improve.

Quotes:

- *Constant and direct supervision of interns from the host institution is crucial.*
- *We didn't know how to monitor students' presence and commitment during remote internships as we didn't have them at the company.*



You may see your intern as a collaborator but don't forget that she/he is there to learn. She/he can be very autonomous but still has to be supervised on the tasks and on their process: what to do, how to do it, with which tool and in what timeframe the tasks must be done.

- ➔ Gratify your intern, keep him/her motivated!
- ➔ When tasks are not done as you expected them to be done: give your intern explanations on what is wrong and how it can be improved.
- ➔ If it is positive, react and tell her/him how incredible she/he is!

- ➔ Use online tools to supervise your intern and follow up on completion of the tasks: make sure that the to do list is feasible and that the conditions allow your intern to actually do her/his tasks!
- ➔ Here are 20 ideas of collaborative tools to supervise your intern:

<https://www.proprofsproject.com/lists/best-project-collaboration-software/>

BEST PRACTICES

Below are examples of practice elaborated and successfully implemented by POZENA, a Polish translation agency striving for the status of the top internship provider.

Feedback after every task:

The intern receives feedback after each task, which helps accelerate the onboarding process as much as possible.

Feedback from the intern:

We ask about internship satisfaction twice during the internship: after 2 weeks (25% of the programme) and after 6 weeks (75% of the programme). Specially dedicated video conferences are used for this purpose.

Feedback regarding the intern:

A formal opinion is attached to the Internship Logbook. The supervisor prepares an additional opinion for our internal needs (the best interns can apply for a paid internship).

Evaluation questionnaire:

At the end of the internship, each intern receives an evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire is anonymous. We want to learn what we can do better in the future. This allows us to continually improve our internship programme.

Wunderman Thompson Technology, Poland

- Every intern is assigned a supervisor, who is an experienced manager and has a rich knowledge about the work place. Their first meeting should clearly set expectations and goals, when it's possible it's nice to have this meeting in the office, face to face. The supervisor has to build a relationship with the intern from the start, communicates the company's values, builds a sense of belonging, tells the company's stories.

The intern is informed that they are expected to learn and establish relationships with others in the team, more than just deliver their work tasks. They are also encouraged to ask questions on public chats both team and company-wide, so that the supervisor isn't the only person who they trust to help them with their problems. Apart from the supervisor, an important person for the intern is the project team leader. – The supervisor cannot help with more technical and task related problems, but the project leader can.

- Interns are full members of the team. They take part in team meetings, where they are encouraged to join in for a discussion – their perspective can be different and that can help with solving some of the problems that the team is facing. There are also meetings during which the team presents their work – interns can show what they have done and present their work and achievements. They can also make special presentations themselves in which they will show more thoroughly their work. Those presentations (referred to as Knowledge Sharing) can be either team or companywide.
- The supervisor meets with the intern every two weeks, but after a month and a half, feedback about the intern is collected and then given to him/her. This helps with evaluation of their work, as well as makes it easier for the intern to set the goals, thinking about the things that can be improved. After three months, which is the end of the internship, feedback is once again collected. This time it's checked if there has been an improvement and if everything is fine. During those meetings feedback is also collected from the intern, to check if the process is good and how the intern felt.

ACADEMIC ADVISORS

ACADEMIC ADVISORS

The role of academic advisors during student internship differs depending on the country and university: in France they are more involved in the entire process than they are in Germany and Poland where the academic advisors' role is limited to checking that the internships were properly completed. In Germany and in Poland, the academic advisors do not interfere in the process and in the cooperation between students and employers, that is unless problems occur.

In total, 51 surveys as well as 11 detailed interviews were conducted among academic advisors. The respondents were mainly from the University of Strasbourg, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology.

The main challenges defined by academic advisors relating to remote/hybrid internships are administrative, communication and organizational difficulties.



Challenge 10

Academic advisors need to constantly follow the changes of the job market related to digital transformation.

Digital transformation is related not only to digital tools, but also and essentially to digital skills relevant for present and future job markets. It requires to prepare our teachers to understand this dynamic process of change better. In other words, we need to start with ourselves! Moreover, the digital transformation will require a constant change and adaptation throughout our professional lives. The technical or hard skills will be evolving but the soft or durable skills will be relevant for all professions. Going beyond the present requires from universities to be ready to offer a set of training sessions for our students and our alumni and to think about them as our “future clients” that will come back for additional training as the progress in their professional career.

Solution 10

Developing training programs for life coaches and life advisors that will track and monitor relevant competences in relation to the expectation of the labour markets and provide personalized advice as to what skills need to be updated.

Universities need to develop a program that will help students, alumni, and other employees to adapt to the ongoing digital transformation. This calls for new professions of life coaches and job advisors that will understand the expectations of new jobs and skills related to digital transformation.

Quotes:

- *We need to be able to identify students' needs related to remote work.*
- *Remote internships foster development of skills required to work on digital platforms required by employers.*



Academic advisors need to be trendwatchers and trendsetters of labour market, so:

- ➔ Try to follow the trends – let yourself be inspired by leading universities and educational institutions

- ➔ Take care of your own professional development – it will help you grasp and understand today's challenges
- ➔ Join conferences, seminars workshops referring to the topic, network

BEST PRACTICES

Modern teachers need digital skills in every level of education – Open University

<https://www.jyu.fi/en/>

Digitally Competent Educators programme is established on a European level in cooperation of four distance teaching universities across Europe:

- The University of Jyväskylä (Finland),
- Universidade Aberta (Portugal),
- Anadolu University (Turkey),
- FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany).

The short learning programme is divided into three modules:

**MODULE 1
Introduction to Digital Competences for Educators**

is an introductory module to gain knowledge of the use of digital technologies for communication, collaboration and professional development, to enhance inclusion, personalization and learners' active engagement.

MODULE 2

Teaching and Learning with Digital Resources comprises managing and orchestrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning including sourcing, creating and sharing digital resources.

MODULE 3

Facilitating and Assessing Learners' Digital Competencies

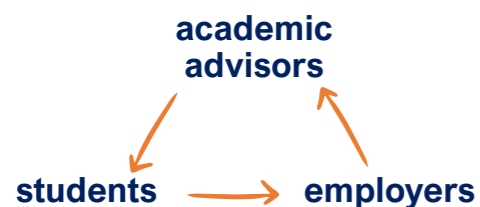
focuses on usage of digital technologies and strategies to enhance assessment by enabling learners to use digital technologies creatively and responsibly for information, communication, content creation, well-being and problem solving.

<https://www.avoin.jyu.fi/fi/opintotarjonta/digcompedu>



Challenge 11

Overcoming communication problems in the triangle:



Online or digital communication is not only about email exchange. It requires different tools that will facilitate the entire process of preparing, implementing, and evaluating hybrid or digital internship. The process of communication should be user friendly, engaging, but also transparent and effective. It requires e.g., precisely defining the roles, responsibilities, and all relevant requirements that need to be fulfilled. An important aspect of such communication is related to overcoming any misunderstandings and potential conflicts or problems that may arise, e.g., access to “intranet” and internal resources of the employers that require authorizations. The tool used during communication needs to help to integrate students better into the working environment and within the team.

On the other hand, relevant tools for effective communication should allow the academic advisor to act as a mediator between the student and the host institution whenever any issues arise; s/he should also fulfil the role of the “support system” in student internships.

Solution 11

Developing a shared toolbox and digital platform for academic advisors, students and employers that will facilitate a quick exchange between all the parties and will allow them to monitor the progress and to update concrete issues and solutions better.

Pen & paper are over! Together with employers, universities should create platforms that allow fluent flow and exchange of documents and make the contact between the parties involved in student internship easy and intuitive. However, there is no one solution that could be recommended for all. Each faculty or university should decide how to link such a platform to the other already existing practices and policies at their place. This platform, with easily searchable contact data of employers and university academic advisors, can also be a way to attract more employers and to engage them in the learning and teaching process.

Furthermore, a platform could be developed with the aim of linking employers and students and with the view to creating a base of offers of internships. It could also contain the lists of offered training sessions on the relevant tools for online communication and business etiquette. Such a platform could also specify and regulate the formal conditions of digital internships.

Regular evaluation of challenges faced by students and employers should be provided and taken into consideration.

Quotes:

- *I appreciated the possibility to attend many various meetings during a single day!*
- *Contact and communication via internet platform are great.*
- *Much better contact with students. I could identify their needs way better.*



Building close relations with the employers, based on trust and knowledge exchange is a better way to fulfill your role as internship advisor, so:

- ➔ Create opportunities for employers to present their profiles, expectations, requirements, values, the company's etiquette, and the internship process.
- ➔ Organize onsite or online employer – student exchanges, informal meetings, networking opportunities.

- ➔ Constantly encourage employers to stay engaged with your university and students through various channels e.g., social media, employers' fairs, joint curricula, alumni programmes.
- ➔ Find the best model for your faculty to build a sustainable platform of cooperation with the employers.

BEST PRACTICES

Some universities already have a working website that serves as an exchange platform

A website with internship and training offer for students at AMU:
<https://biurokarier.amu.edu.pl/english/students-and-graduates>

A website with internships offers for Erasmus students:
<https://erasmusintern.org>



Challenge 12

Strengthening relations and links with employers.

Efficient multidimensional cooperation requires systemic approach and organizational spaces that in turn entail engaging academic and administrative staff. If we want both students and employers to benefit from the internships, we should create tools and paths of action that would endow us with successful networking capabilities. In this way we could define and meet the needs of all participants of the process, adapt to changes quickly, and eventually monitor the results of our cooperation. All parties involved should be able to benefit from the cooperation.

Solution 12

Developing internship and training centres at the faculties and developing data base(s) of employers catalogued according to the specific areas of study. Inclusion of employers in the teaching programs.

Faculties together with Career Offices should create and maintain dynamic data bases with the use of the digital platform mentioned above that would contain potential employers with detailed information on their needs, expectations towards the students, the prerequisite skills the students should possess, and the competences that the students may gain during the internships offered. Clear evaluation criteria of internships should also be defined. Including employers in teaching programs already at the initial phases of drafting as well as the later stages of implementation will help students acquire skills and competences throughout two courses preparing them for a successful internship (see e-learning module recommendation) should be available.

Quotes:

- *If you are an employer, learn about the university culture and organization/schedule of the given academic year, build relations with academic supervisors and university careers service offices.*



In order to help students in fulfilling distant or hybrid internships, here are a few ideas for you, as an academic advisor, to implement.

- ➔ Develop cooperation with external partners of your faculty – ask and inquire about employers needs and expectations.
- ➔ Remember about the potential of alumni
- ➔ Ensure that data base of offers and faculty partners are created and constantly updated and developed.
- ➔ Working closely with your university's career service maybe helpful in the process of finding internships.

- ➔ Take opportunities to network – participate in conferences, seminars, workshops, working groups etc. - with employers and faculty partners. Through these means of communication, you might spark ideas amongst your students, direct them subtly towards relevant fields and spread awareness around what kind of internships they would want to apply for.
- ➔ Some mailing lists are a good way to relay offers and have proven very effective for students to keep up to date with latest news regarding internship offers and their field of studies altogether. Mastering the art of digital communication is key in our day and age.

BEST PRACTICES

Simply Do Ideas

<https://www.southwales.ac.uk/news/news-2017/pioneering-digital-platform-set-bring-education-and-business-together/>

The education technology firm Simply Do Ideas, has partnered with the University of South Wales to launch the UK's first digital platform to allow universities and businesses to collaborate on business solutions.

The digital platform Simply Link, the first of its kind, is set to revolutionise how commercial organisations and universities work together. It will enable SMEs, third sector organisations and charities to ask for assistance from students across university-wide courses via an online platform. The challenges that businesses post will be assigned to an entrepreneurial team based at the university to assess, analyse and advise businesses.

The initiative will enable students to apply themselves to real business issues, ensuring their learning is combined with live projects and applied in a commercial environment to help boost their real-world experience.



In return, businesses will benefit from greater access to academia alongside strategic and creative problem solving.

Students and businesses will start using the online platform, developed by Walesbased Simply Do Ideas, this term. Simply Do Ideas is an education technology disruptor, supporting the development and growth of early-stage business ideas through an online platform used within schools, colleges and universities. The new platform, designed for the University of South Wales, demonstrates an innovative approach to enterprise education from both partners.

UNIVERSITY
ADMINISTRATIVE
STAFF

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

University administrative staff working in different administration units e.g., related to mobility, legal issues, accreditation, supports the other target groups in remote/hybrid internships. Therefore, the solutions provided for the other target groups pertain to the university administrative staff as well.

In total, we conducted 46 surveys and 9 detailed individual interviews among the members of the university administrative staff. Respondents mainly come from the University of Strasbourg, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, and from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. There were also respondents from BOKU in Vienna and from Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz.

The respondents pointed to the most frequent administrative problems related to the internship agreement as experienced from their perspective:

- Legislation procedures (especially for internships abroad or with foreign companies)
- Signature procedures
- Students' insurance
- Issues of students' gratification.



Designed by pch.vector / Freepik

Challenge 13

Different university services should be interconnected.

Career services should closely cooperate with other relevant administration offices e.g., international exchange and mobility, legal departments. The documentation workflow should be agreed on and understood by all the parties involved with the view to avoiding misunderstandings and the duplication of tasks. This is particularly relevant for internships abroad where translation of documents is required and different legal issues need to be heeded and reconciled. Here, the difficulty stems also from the necessity of reaching agreement with regard to the recognition and/or administrative approval of diverse types of internships, whether voluntary or obligatory, by the different university curricula.

Solution 13

Developing a shared toolbox and digital platform for employers, academic advisors, students, and university administrative staff that will facilitate a quick exchange between all the parties involved and will allow them to monitor the progress better as well as to update specific concerns and solutions.

Each faculty or university should decide how to link such a platform with the other already existing practices and policies of universities. This platform, with contact data of employers and university academic advisors, can also be a way to attract more employers and to engage them in the learning and teaching processes. When it comes to remote and hybrid internships, such a search engine would help the students find the most appropriate employer. It would also be a good medium for companies to present their internship offers.

Quotes:

- *Digital work offers so many more communication channels with various actors.*
- *Remote work means much higher flexibility, especially when appointing consulting meetings with students.*



- ➔ Develop and offer tools for both professional and less formal meetings, e.g., world café format, virtual coffee breaks, chat options, Q&A, etc.
- ➔ Create an expert group that would integrate people from different administration units and levels.

BEST PRACTICES

The multiuniversity Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project DigiPass Project developed a training programme on virtual environment for supporting mobility.

University administrative staff can access to a staff toolkit, including checklists, testimonials and FAQs. The DigiPass Team developed also modules on cultural awareness, on health and wellbeing and career preparation.

We highly recommend to consult the DigiPass website under

<https://www.digi-pass.eu>

for more information and to join the community.



vecteezy.com

Challenge 14**Adapting organizational, administrative, and technical processes and tools to digital reality of internships (building university digital capacity).**

In terms of digital transitions, universities are lagging behind the business environment. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly accelerated the technological advancement there as well. Still universities need to expand their digital potential, adopt and adjust their resources, infrastructure, legislation, processes, capabilities, and culture.

It is extremely important not to forget that digital transformation is about people and their mindsets, their skills, and their competences. Embracing digital culture goals on the level of leaderships, scientists, students, and administration is a key to successful digital transformation. As for digital internship, the process should be simplified without too many administrative burdens. This requires trust between all the participants involved, whereas the procedure including the relevant documentation and the legislation should always be clearly communicated and accessible to students and employers.

Solution 14**Integrating digital transformation into university missions, strategies, and policies: responding to the need of building the new digital culture at the universities as well as sustaining and developing digital literacy.**

This is a systemic, vertical, and horizontal solution that is in fact a precondition for digital transition of universities and for effective digital relations with other partners and stakeholders. As indicated above, it requires not only investing in the university infrastructure but in people and in the new digital approach to university organization in general that would include remote teaching and learning as part of the digital internship process.

Also, a platform could be developed on the level of the EPICUR alliance with the aim of linking employers and students as well as with the view to creating a base of offers of internships and training sessions on relevant tools for online communication and/or business etiquette. Such a platform could also specify and regulate the formal conditions of digital internships.

**Quotes:**

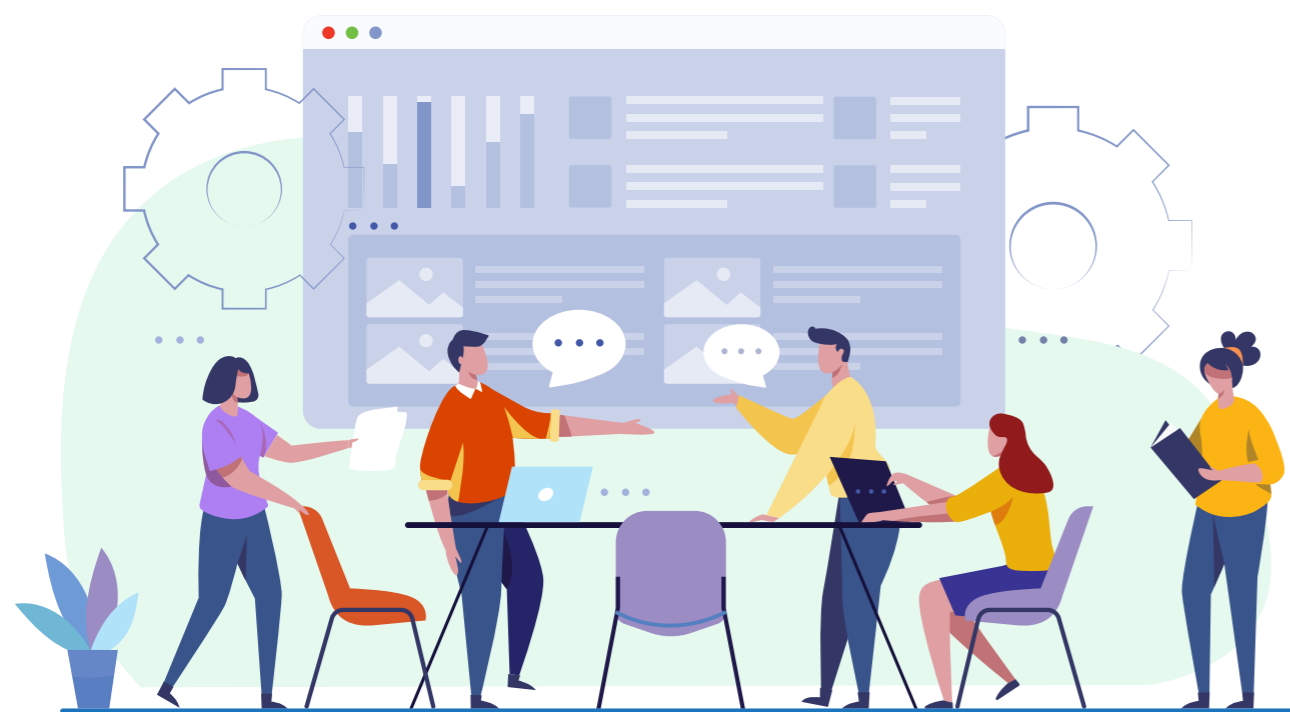
- *Developing platforms of cooperation amongst academia and employers is crucial!*



Digital development and transformation are dynamically evolving issues, so:

- ➔ Be ambassador of digital transformation – search for inspiration and best practice
- ➔ Keep an open mind and be flexible

- ➔ Join the teams responsible for strategy of your institution
- ➔ Don't be afraid to suggest solutions



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BEST PRACTICES**Durham University Digital Strategy**

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/cis/digitalstrategy/>

University of Greenwich Digital Strategy

<https://docs.gre.ac.uk/rep/information-and-library-services/digital-strategy>

University of Leeds DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR STUDENT EDUCATION

https://ses.leeds.ac.uk/info/22149/a-z_of_policies_and_key_documents/639/digital_strategy_for_student_education

University of Oxford Digital Strategy

https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/field/field_document/Digital%20Strategy.pdf



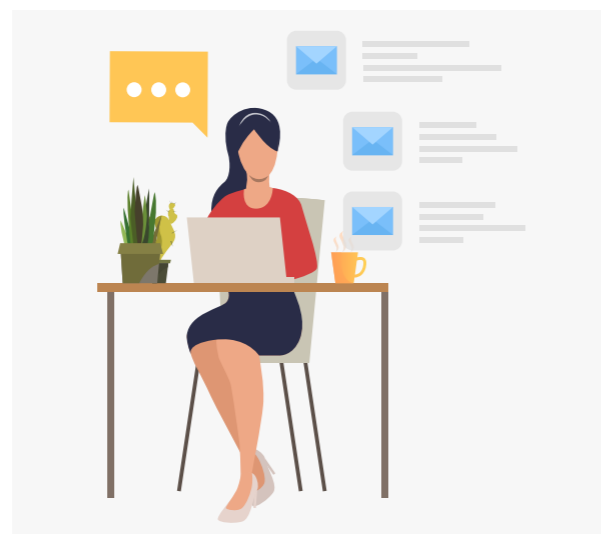
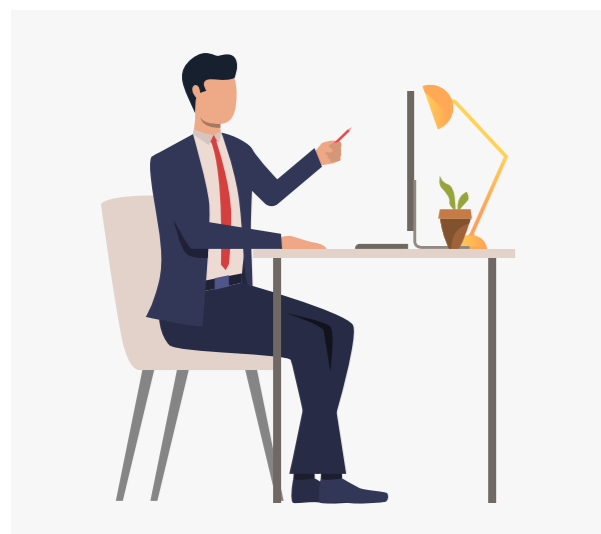
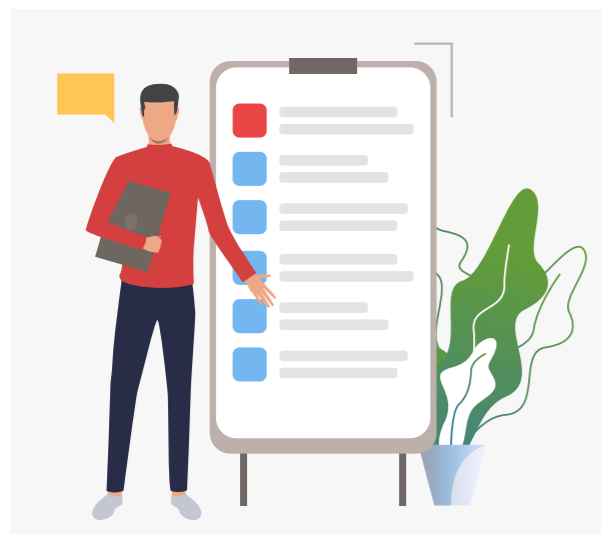
E-Learning

Module Recommendations

The challenges and solutions mentioned above are also a clear guideline for preparing e-learning modules that will support the process of preparing and conducting remote and hybrid internships.

The following recommendations for modules are based on feedback from all target groups gathered in our European wide survey and interviews. As the target groups (students, employers, academic advisors and administrative staff) share many challenges when it comes to remote internships, one module can be addressed to different target groups, so they are structured topic wise. Not all recommendations you can see below, will be translated into modules in the end.

All modules that we will choose to develop in the end will be found on EPIDI's website <https://epidi.unistra.fr>



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Module COMMUNICATION

aiming to train on effective communication in remote internships

- How to use digital tools for efficient communication and work management in a remote internship
- Secrets of effective online communication
- Online conflicts: most common mistakes made in online communication
- Digital integration – How to use various formats like world café and virtual coffee breaks to ensure a smooth onboarding and integration
- Building virtual relations and managing team work

Module SOFT SKILLS

aiming on the one hand to prepare students to step into the professional world and on the other for all targets to develop networking skills

- Future me – how to define personal goals of development, define strengths, identify opportunities
- How to properly prepare for job interview(s) – video tutorial
- Business etiquette and manners – video tutorial
- How to create, maintain and develop professional networks
- Outside-the-box: techniques and methods supporting creativity
- Fast and constant learner – techniques of fast learning and solution seeking

Module WORK LIFE BALANCE

aiming to inform about and offer help with the specific challenges of remote internships concerning wellbeing

- How to overcome isolation in remote internships
- How to stay motivated in remote internships
- Self-organization, management, and behavioural issues
- How to deal with malicious management / bullying / burnout / depression

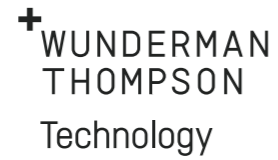
Module ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

aiming at providing all target groups with the necessary information about the documents that legislate the internship and which are required

- Roadmap – what do you need for your internship
- Legal procedures for remote internships

PARTNERS

*Special thanks to our partners who shared with us their experience and knowledge
– their input had a significant impact on the shape of this Best Practice Guide.*



Let's stay in touch!



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Krzysztof Molenda

ILLUSTRATIONS

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