

What to do about internships in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Student Guide to Frequently Asked Questions

Resource adapted from the following sources:

The Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions; University of Wisconsin – Madison

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

California State Fullerton's "Proposed Remote/Virtual Internship Guidelines"



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What are online, remote, virtual, or "micro" internships?

Before we answer this question, it is important to consider the definition of an in-person internship. In the FSU College of Business, we see internships as *“a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.”* (National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)).

To ensure that an experience - *whether a traditional internship or one conducted virtually* - is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the NACE definition, all the following criteria must be met:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

For more information about the NACE Internship Statement please visit http://www.naceweb.org/connections/advocacy/internship_position_paper/

Internships provide many benefits. A few of those employer benefits include:

- Short-term support without a long-term commitment
- Management experience for supervisors/mentors who direct the intern's work activities
- Opportunity to evaluate student job candidates before offering permanent employment
- Best source of new permanent employees
- Higher retention rates for employees with company internship experience
- Source of new ideas and fresh approach to problem solving, critical thinking, communications, etc.
- Highly enthusiastic, capable, and motivated students
- Company name recognition and increased visibility on-campus

Furthermore, we also consider the following features to be elements of an effective internship:

- Sustained engagement with the physical, socio-cultural and institutional features of an actual workplace
- Supervision by staff at the internship host organization who are trained in mentorship
- Cultivation of both cultural (i.e., skills, knowledge, professional norms) and social (i.e., professional networks) capital valued by a profession and/or discipline

What are online, remote, virtual, or "micro" internships?

Consequently, our position on virtual internships is that by definition they cannot provide many of the important features of an in-person work-based learning experience, including the development and appreciation of workplace norms, the performance of certain tasks, and certain aspects of mentorship and relationship building. As such, we see these as a complement to the traditional internship experience that provides additional opportunities for engagement between students and professional organizations.

That said, here are some definitions of online, remote, virtual, or "micro" internships:

Virtual internships are internships that are done online or remotely anytime of the year. This allows the student to work on a global scale, but stay local. They are placed with a company and report to a supervisor. They are also in regular contact with the supervisor/team via virtual methods such as video call, phone call, email, and instant messenger. (<https://virtualinternships.com/faqs/>)

"Micro" Internships are short-term, paid, professional assignments similar to those given to new hires or interns. These projects enable college students, graduate students, and recent college graduates to demonstrate skills, explore career paths, and build their networks as they seek the right full-time role. Unlike traditional internships, "micro" internships can take place year-round, typically range from five to 40 hours of work, and projects are due between one week and one month after start date. "Micro" internships are used by companies ranging from those in the Fortune 100 to emerging start-ups, and go across departments including accounting, finance, HR Management, Management, Management Information Systems, Marketing, Professional Sales, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate and Retail Management. (<https://www.parkerdewey.com/faq>).

What are the benefits of an online internship given the current situation?

The primary benefit of an online internship is they can provide students with a safe, work-based learning experience that is grounded in an authentic task or project for a firm or organization. Depending on the nature of the project, students can also develop skills – either technical, inter-personal or intra-personal by successfully completing one or more professional assignments on behalf of a professional organization. Additionally, an online internship can provide students experience with engaging in online project management and communications, which are common modes of project- and task-performance in many organizations. Last, an online internship includes no travel or housing costs, and thus may be a solution for those who cannot afford to relocate to expensive cities for extended periods.

Depending on the quality and character of the experience, an online internship may also provide some of the benefits outlined above, including new professional contacts, introduction to professional norms, and so on. But for these benefits to be experienced in an online setting, employers need to carefully design an experience that is more than a mere short- term project out-sourced to college students.

What are some of the drawbacks of an online internship?

The drawbacks of online internships include the lack of in-person relationship building, immersion in the physical and cultural spaces of a firm or organization, and fewer opportunities to engage in the ad hoc interaction that typically arises during an on-site experience.

In addition, while many companies are using online internships as pathways to hire prospective full-time employees and students are using them to find the right job fit, both need to be sensitive to risk of “normalizing” this type of relationship. In particular, the professional development, relationship building and other benefits of an employee/employer relationship are especially meaningful for early career professionals, so both parties need to be sensitive to viewing these models as a replacement.

Furthermore, as highlighted in critiques of the gig economy (e.g., Uber or Lyft drivers), these positions do not have the job security or benefits that full-time employees in a firm or organization often enjoy. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, these workers often lack healthcare and paid sick leave, leading many to show up to work while ill and/or unable to pay their bills given the lack of a steady paycheck.

For considerations of the “gig” aspects of online internships, this essay by Julia Freeland Fisher of the Christensen Institute is a good introduction. <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/micro-internships-just-a-gig-or-a-promising-gateway/>

How do I find a virtual internship?

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, many of you may experience a transition to virtual work, cancellation of your internship, or even a hiring freeze. Regardless of the situation that you face, we will work to ensure you have resources to assist you in finding meaningful work during this unprecedented time. FSU is prioritizing safety and asks that all students seeking work experience this summer, look to virtual options. The list below provides suggestions and is dynamic in nature. Therefore, as more resources become available, you will be notified.

- [College of Business Jobs & Internships Board](#) – Browse this list of job and internship listings posted for FSU business students. You will log into the system with your FSU ID & password.
- **College of Business Internships & Career Services E - newsletter** – This electronic newsletter is automatically distributed every week to business students and includes information on receiving academic credit, finding opportunities, and other career resources. Make sure you are checking your email and that the information is not accidentally going to your spam/clutter file. If you are not receiving the source and you are a College of Business student, feel free to reach out at internships@business.fsu.edu so that we can assist.
- **College of Business Internships & Career Services Social Media Pages** – The College of Business Internships & Career Services Office maintains a [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#) (@FSUBizInterns) page where we share relevant career content on a daily basis. Consider following these platforms to stay informed.

How do I find a virtual internship?

- [Virtual Career Fairs](#) - This list, updated daily by the [FSU Career Center](#), provides students opportunities to connect to employers seeking students for internships and full-time opportunities.
- [Employers Hiring](#) – This resource reflects employers we have identified as still hiring for internships and full-time opportunities, including a link to a list of job boards with job postings from employers hiring for virtual full-time, part-time and internships.
- [#HiringNow](#) – This list on LinkedIn provides details on companies that are still hiring.
- [Internship updates](#) of companies who have cancelled, paused, or moved to remote/virtual experiences. Be sure to check the third column to clarify status.
- [Candor](#) is providing live updates of which companies are still hiring or freezing hiring

Are virtual internships paid?

Our position in the FSU College of Business is that internships, regardless of format, should be paid. If the work is truly meaningful for the organization then it is likely to be worth compensating the student employee for their work. However, the College of Business can't promise that all virtual internships will be paid. That decision is left with the employer and is often dependent on their ability to provide compensation. Currently, unpaid internships are legal as long as they follow the internship guidelines outlined under the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#).

Ultimately, it will be your decision whether you are willing and able to accept an unpaid position or not.

Can I receive academic credit for my virtual internship?

Yes, a student can receive academic credit for an approved virtual internship experience. The process to apply for academic internship credit through the FSU College of Business has not changed and is outlined at this [website](#).

Can I receive pay and academic credit at the same time for my virtual internship?

Yes, students can receive both academic credit and financial compensation for the same internship experience. The two are neither mutually exclusive nor conflicting. However, the FSU College of Business can only encourage employers to provide compensation, but not require them to do so.

What is the deadline to apply for summer academic internship credit?

Regular registration for summer 2020 ends on Friday, April 24. However, if you have not secured your virtual internship by that date, we can consider your request during the summer drop/add period (May 9 - 14). Late adds will also be considered through the third week of the summer term (May 29). If you are not able to enroll in Summer Session A, there will be a drop/add period for Summer Session C between June 20 and 25.

What exactly does it mean to receive academic credit for my internship?

Some students may choose to count the internship experience toward their scholarship in practice requirement, as a major requirement, or as an elective credit toward graduation hours. If either of those reasons fits your academic needs, you should apply for academic internship credit once your internship is secured. Application instructions are available on the following [website](#). Once your application is received, the FSU College of Business Internships and Career Services

Office will ensure that you meet course enrollment requirements. If so, you will be approved to enroll in an online internship course that must be taken during the same semester as your internship. The course is a supplement to your internship experience administered via Canvas, and involves reflection and evaluation. If you successfully complete the course and internship, you will pass the class and receive academic credit for your experience.

How many hours am I required to work in my virtual internship to receive academic credit?

It depends on the internship course in which you enroll. The College of Business has nine online internship courses. To receive at least three credit hours, you must work at least 150 work hours. Undergraduate students have a variable credit hour option, GEB 4941, that can be taken for zero to six credits. The chart found at this [link](#) provides a breakdown of all nine internship course options and their enrollment requirements. Please review that information carefully to determine the course that will meet your individual needs.

How is my internship course graded?

All College of Business internship courses are graded S/U (e.g. satisfactory/unsatisfactory). Therefore, it will not affect your GPA, but will provide credit hours depending on the course you choose.

Will my internship course enrollment fulfill a Scholarship in Practice (SIP) requirement?

Yes, all College of Business internship courses will help you fulfill one of your scholarship in practice requirements. This includes the zero credit hour version of GEB 4941. Taking GEB 4941 for zero credit hours will provide you with transcript recognition, not academic credit, but it can still be used to fulfill a scholarship in practice requirement if you are not in need of academic credit hours.

Can I receive academic credit for an internship that I completed last semester?

No. The College of Business does not provide retroactive internship credit. You must do the internship and complete the online internship course during the same semester.

What should my virtual experience entail?

Virtual internships will vary based on employer and project assigned. However, the list below provides a sample of components we encourage employers to incorporate to ensure you both have a meaningful experience.

- 1. Access.** It is important that you, the student, have the technical capability to complete projects, maintain frequent contact to address questions, and to submit assignments. Lack of access should not be a barrier for any student.
- 2. Thorough onboarding and orientation.** A virtual orientation can consist of testing the technology, meeting other interns/staff members (as appropriate), learning about the organization, and reviewing organization-wide communication standards and workplace expectations (including taking required legal breaks, lunches, and a system of tracking hours).
- 3. Goal and Learning Objectives.** Work with your supervisor to develop a plan to ensure established goals are met and check in regularly throughout the internship to see if you are on track to meet those goals.
- 4. Timely Feedback.** Like in-person learning environments, supervisors should review intern deliverables and provide timely feedback to students on a regular basis.
- 5. Consistent Communication.** Summative feedback should also be provided. This includes an update on expected work activities for the week, outcomes from prior work submissions, and other relevant announcements pertaining to the organization.
- 6. Pre-arranged Schedules.** Although a key feature of remote internships is the flexibility of the work schedule, supervisors and interns should agree upon a definitive time allotment per week and per day for internship activities.

What should my virtual experience entail?

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

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

9. Written Contract or Agreement. Your supervisor may develop some sort of contract or written agreement about the arrangement between you and the company. Such an agreement may address issues such as expectations, compensation, nature of supervision and so on.

10. Final Evaluation. At the conclusion of the experience, all parties should evaluate one another and provide feedback on challenges and successes with the online internship. This feedback can be used to improve program operations and assist interns in their continued professional development.

I graduate this summer and an internship is a requirement for my major. What happens if I am unable to secure a virtual internship by June 25?

If alternative courses are not available and you have made every attempt to secure a meaningful experience without success, contact our office at internships@business.fsu.edu. We will work with you individually to create projects or learning experiences that are similarly robust and authentic. If this is your situation, please let us know no later than June 20.

For additional assistance, contact the FSU College of Business Internships & Career Services Office at internships@business.fsu.edu or 850-644-8495.