

IMI Employer Guide to Remote Work Term Placements

Onboarding Remotely

A thoughtful and planned approach to hiring and onboarding a work-term student remotely can make the process smooth, efficient, and ensure your student feels part of the time right away.

Advance Preparation

- Confirm with HR: what documentation does the student need to sign? NDAs or any confidentiality statements? What about how the student stores his or her work? Check to see what policies or procedures the student should read or be made aware of.
- Confirm with IT: what technology will the student require for his or her work? How will you ensure the student has access to necessary documents, shared drives or other tools?
- Make a list: what materials will the student need to read up on, or move through, to be brought up to speed?
- Consider workflow: what hours do you need the student to work? How will you track the students output and productivity? What hours do you actually need the student to work – and do you have flexibility in those hours in a remote work scenario?
- Consider communications: how would you like the student to communicate with you remotely? Think about how you would like to interact – by phone, Zoom, Teams, email, or other mechanism, and prepare to familiarize the student with those mechanisms.

The Welcome Wagon

- Set the students first day up in a structured way, so he or she knows who to look for – online! – on the first day. Email the student a schedule for the first day in advance, including any appropriate reading (handbooks, policies, etc.)
- Encourage each team member to reach out to the student for a 1:1 meeting in the first week or two, so he or she can spend some online-face-time with each person individually to learn who is responsible for what.
- Ensure the student knows your door is “open” – and that he or she, despite the remote nature of the arrangement – can reach out through email, phone, Slack, or other platform.
- Identify your backup-supervisor, so the student knows who to ask for help if you are not available.

Supporting Your Student Remotely

Once the student starts, there are a few things you can do to help make the work term run smoothly. Not being in the office, the student is at a disadvantage in certain distinct ways: he or she can't make easy communication connections with staff, and they cannot access feedback easily or quickly.

Regular Connection & Consistency

- Set regular calendar meetings for 1:1 and team check ins with the student. In a remote setting, there are no coffee-side chats or watercooler run ins, and the student cannot pop into your office for questions or help.
- Be consistent with feedback: since the student is working at home alone, it's hard for them to know how they are performing, as they don't see others around working or cannot hear the office chatter. Offering regular – weekly, or daily, or some other routine – feedback and guidance will be critical.

Team Culture

- Include the student in any team activities taking place. Ideas include a half hour once a week to play “Quarantine Bingo”, share favourite books, do a “show and tell”, or just chat about non-work things.

Empathy and Awareness

- Be aware that the student may be grappling with additional out-of-work challenges, such as worries about family and friends, financial struggles, or anxieties arising from world events, including COVID-19. As someone who is new to the workforce, the student may not have the coping skills yet that your more seasoned staff do, so keep an listening ear for signs of the student struggling.
- Working remotely, especially as the new intern or co-op student, is very challenging for the student in terms of feeling unsure about their performance and capabilities. You may need to be more verbal or clear than you would normally be in-person around things they are doing well, and areas for improvement.
- Reach out to Program Staff at IMI if you have any concerns about your student during the work term period.

Privacy and Cyber Security Working from Home

As more staff are working from home and for longer periods of time, the importance of privacy and data security has increased. Working from home can be daunting for everyone, particularly interns and placement students who are new to such an environment. Consider producing a guideline that provides students a 'guideline' on how to use new software that staff will be using and information how to maintain privacy with sensitive information. Set clear expectations for the ongoing protection of confidential information and privacy policies during onboarding and if possible, perhaps include a tutorial with the IT team as part of the onboarding process

Health & Safety Working from Home

As employees shift to working from home, try and consider ways to continue to promote health and safety. Check in with your interns to ensure that they have a safe and well-resourced workplace to ensure a safe working environment. Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Act applies to work arrangements. For more information please visit: <https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/>.

Please ensure the student is aware of your organization's sick leave policy, should they become ill, and that they know the resources, benefits and support they can access should they fall ill during the placement. If your student does fall ill, please let the Placement Manager know.

Additional Resources

- CEWIL Canada & Brock University: [Tips for Onboarding Students Remotely](#)
- CEWIL Canada & Brock University: [Tips for Supervising Students Remotely](#)
- [CEWIL Resources](#) – COVID-19, Government Resources and more.

Need Assistance?

Please contact the Placement & Employer Relations Manager in the Program you are working with.

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