# Virtual Internship

| Approach | Virtual Internship |
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| **Introduction** | |
| The trend towards virtual internship has increased in recent years. Students look for such opportunity to gain knowledge and experience through work without too much difficulty, especially if they live far away from where the internship is offered.  A virtual internship is a great opportunity for them to gain experience from literally anywhere.  What such an internship offers is that it enables students to gather work experience with companies based in their own country or anywhere else in the world. The basic idea is that rather than having to be in the same location as the company where they are doing their internship, they carry out their internship virtually by working remotely from home or any place with a good internet connection. Students have the opportunity to be a part of the team even if they are not in the office. The most important aspect of such an internship is to make sure there is regular contact with a manager or people in the company/institution responsible for the task being carried out by the intern, via messenger, email, phone or any project management tool. | |
| **Overall aim** | To improve a student's employability by allowing them to gather additional skills and experiences and to facilitate them in finding interesting job opportunities all over the world (starting in their own country) |
| **Target group:** | Any courses/occupations that are suitable for remote working e.g. translators, graphic designers, architects, counsellors, etc. |
| **Intended learning outcomes** | |
| <ul><li>Ability to work remotely</li><li>Experience of working in real environment</li><li>Learn how to prioritise time and effort</li><li>Improve ability to use new technology for working</li><li>Gain specific skills related to chosen career</li></ul> | |
| **Description** | |
| A virtual internship is much like a traditional internship, enabling a student to gain skills and experience expected at the future work place. The process of finding a suitable internship is mostly done by the student. Although Internet sites offer international opportunities matching students expectations and skills, such initiatives are still somewhat rare – lets see what we can do to build up the interest!<br><br>If the internship is supposed to be fulfilled at the teaching staff's university/institution a schedule of the tasks has to be prepared and given to the student.<br><br>If the student is doing the internship in an external company and the teaching staff member takes the role of a counsellor his/her task is to give advice/feedback to help the student through the experience if necessary. | |

The teaching staff member is also responsible for signing the agreement with the company, checking the internship reports filled in by the student and feedback provided by the representative of the company.

During the internship, the teaching staff member needs to give instructions / tasks / feedback, check results, and read references and reports sent by the company if applicable.

The frequency of contact and the possibility of using ICT tools depends on the individual agreement between the student and the  institution providing a virtual work experience.

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| Preparation | The teaching staff member needs to prepare either the tasks for the student or connect him/her with a relevant department within the university. Alternatively, the staff member may be involved by signing the agreement with the external company where the student is doing an internship |
| Required resources and equipment | Suitable hardware, software and internet connection for the student to be in contact with the company as regularly as required. |
| Success factors | Independence and self-reliance, self-discipline of the person willing to work remotely with no actual supervisor. |
| Advantages | The main advantages to this approach are:<br><br>• no cost of transport or relocation<br>• allows student to continue to meet his/her other commitments n their university/college<br>• provides an opportunity for the student to expand their knowledge and experience with social media, as well as various different tools and communication services. |
| Disadvantages | There may be several disadvantages in relation to this approach:<br><br>• the potential lack of supervision<br>• the extent to which a student feels less involved in the internship as it is 'only virtual'<br>• lack of face-to-face interaction (which is often a defining feature of the job in humanities and social sciences - that can be overcome by video conference e.g. via Skype) |
| Additional information | This website offers opportunities for virtual internships.<br><br>The European funded project PROVIP (2012-2014) was a continuation of EU-VIP. The main objectives of PROVIP  were the further dissemination of the EU-VIP outcomes, especially to companies and the translation of the EU-VIP findings in an online tool to support virtual internships. These outputs |

| | provide useful guidance to anyone interested in introducing virtual internships and are available [here](#). |