



VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

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A Comprehensive Guide to Recruiting
NYU Abu Dhabi Interns Virtually during the
COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

As the world comes together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations around the world are finding ways to adapt to the ‘new normal’ for how we work. Finding ways to shift internship opportunities from in-person to digital is a new challenge that companies across industries are working hard on finding creative solutions for.

Organizations that commit to developing a talent pipeline during troubling times are likely to stay ahead of the curve and recover better from recessions.¹ While cost-cutting measures are almost always necessary in a downturn, it’s important to balance them out with strategies that will create a talent pipeline for the future. Industry downturns like the one currently underway creates a wealth of opportunity, mainly due to the large pool of available and eager talent. Recruiting virtual interns is a cost neutral and low-commitment way to tap into this pool.

While working remotely isn’t feasible for certain roles, it is an option for many. Shared virtual workspaces make regular ‘face-to-face’ meetings, supervision, and real time feedback on projects possible and allow remote internships to be just as enriching as in-person opportunities. The NYU Abu Dhabi Career Development Center (CDC) is here to support organizations during this challenging time to help seamlessly shift in-person internship programs to fulfilling virtual work experience opportunities.

This guide will help organizations structure a robust virtual internship program, provide resources, and answer frequently asked questions.

Developing a Virtual Internship Program

Developing a solid plan to implement an internship program is the first step in ensuring the success of your virtual internship. As this will likely be the first time that many students take on an internship virtually, set structure and adequate guidance is crucial to their success. Organizations are encouraged to develop a structured and organized virtual internship plan prior to recruiting to ensure that the program mutually benefits the organization’s

¹ Ernst & Young. “Recruiting during a downturn.” EY website, [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-recruiting-during-a-downturn/\\$FILE/ey-recruiting-during-a-downturn.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-recruiting-during-a-downturn/$FILE/ey-recruiting-during-a-downturn.pdf)

needs as well as the professional development of the intern.

Outline and Announce a Virtual Internship Plan In Your Organization

This plan can differ depending on the size of the organization, the departmental needs, and how soon an intern needs to be recruited. Organizations can begin by communicating the launch of their virtual internship program and its purpose to all members of the organization, or at least identify what departments need support from an intern. This will help ensure that staff members at the organization are involved in structuring the program which will in turn create space for feedback and allow for an effective implementation of the program.

Allow Departments to Opt-In

Departments within the organization should be given the opportunity to request an intern as per their individual needs so that the needs of the organization can be assessed collectively. Proposals from departments should include details such as which staff member(s) will supervise and train the intern, what responsibilities and projects the intern will be taking on, and how many hours per week they estimate an intern will be expected to work.

Procure Virtual Workspace Platforms

Virtual workspace platforms that the internship will be held on should be agreed upon in advance to the internship program being rolled out. [Zoom](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), [Slack](#) and [Google Docs](#) are just some examples of virtual workspaces that are utilized by organizations.

Establish Clear Start and End Dates for the Internship

Organizations should decide when they want to begin and end their virtual internship program. All internship programs should be mindful of NYUAD's academic calendar, including milestone dates such as the last day of courses, finals, January terms, and spring breaks. Please review the following chart when considering dates for your organization's internship program:

Academic Term	Approximate Dates*
Fall	Late August to mid- December
January Term	early to late January
Spring	late January to mid-May
Summer	mid May to late August

NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) students can take on virtual internships throughout the year. Internships typically last anywhere from 6 to 12 weeks, based on the organization's needs and student availability. Students are able to work part-time during the academic semesters and full-time during the summers. During the academic year, students are permitted to work up to 20 hours per week. All students are available to work in a full-time capacity during the summer period and other times when classes are not in session.

Identify Ideal Candidates

Clarifying the qualifications and criteria organizations are looking to target is a factor to consider in the internship planning process. Organizations should decide on relevant skill sets and competencies, desired class levels, specific majors (if relevant), and academic achievements (e.g., minimum GPA).

Note: NYUAD exercises a non-discrimination policy and therefore cannot post a position that preferences one nationality, ethnic background or gender. The only exception to this rule would be in the case of recruiting Emirati national talent.

Identify Desired Skills and Competencies

Key competencies are specific qualities that a company's recruiters consider desirable for employees to possess. They are often used as benchmarks to rate and evaluate candidates during the recruitment process, especially when reviewing application forms and at interview. Here are a few examples of key competencies and skills that are frequently cited on job descriptions that can help identify suitable candidates for remote roles:

- *Strong communication skills*
- *Time management skills*
- *Flexibility*
- *Writing skills*
- *Evidence of ability to work independently and proactively*
- *Taking initiative with projects and tasks*
- *Computer skills*
- *Critical thinking*
- *Research and Analysis*
- *Adaptability*

Tip: It is worth keeping in mind that this may be the first time that students are taking on a virtual internship, and evidence of working independently on projects should be expected from potential candidates. Remote work requires an independent work environment which makes self-motivation and organizational skills a necessity.

Write an Effective Job Description

A clear and detailed job description is a critical component to a successful virtual internship program. Along with conveying purpose and commitment to students interested in applying for the position, a clear description of the virtual internship role will help attract high caliber candidates that fit the requirements organizations are looking for. A detailed job description template can be found in Appendix A.

It is important to be as specific as possible about intern job functions so that organizations can market positions effectively and recruit the right students. The most important items included in a well-written job description are:

- *Organization name/description*
- *A working title*
- *A list of specific qualifications required and desired, such as skills, experience, knowledge, education/coursework, GPA, and class level*
- *Key projects or tasks that the intern will be working on*
- *A tentative start date*
- *A tentative duration of the position*
- *How many hours per week are required*
- *How much, if anything, the role pays*

Recruiting for your Virtual Internship Program

Organizations should ideally plan ahead when developing a recruitment schedule targeted to university students. Our team is available to assist organizations with their unique recruitment timeline needs during this challenging time. Whether organizations have a few weeks for the process or a quick turnaround, a tailored recruitment plan can help ensure that organizations recruit the best talent for their virtual internship vacancies.

Set a Recruitment Timeline

Before organizations begin the recruitment process, a realistic recruitment timeline that suits their needs should be established. This timeline should ideally allow ample time for the job to be posted and marketed, applications to be reviewed, interviews to be conducted, and selections to be made. Recruitment for virtual interns can be expedited as needed, but we recommend allowing at least two weeks for the recruitment process.

Post your Position to Handshake

Organizations looking to recruit NYUAD virtual interns can [create an account on Handshake](#), our career services platform, to post their position. Posting a position to Handshake is the most strategic way to tap in to the largest number of qualified and interested virtual internship candidates. Students regularly check Handshake in search of virtual opportunities, and posting here will give your organization the kind of online visibility that is essential during this time of remote work. Additionally, it provides access to more than 30,000 students via the NYU network of active students in New York and Shanghai, as well as Abu Dhabi. Handshake also allows organizations to keep track of applicants that apply for positions, search through CVs of relevant students, and more.

Request a CV Book

Organizations looking to expedite the recruitment process can review curated CV books based on a specific skill or academic background to get a broad overview of student talent. To request a CV book, organizations can specify concrete requirements (e.g. desired majors, skills, class year) to our employer relations team (nyuad.employer@nyu.edu). It is important to note that CV books only include students who have previously opted to make their information available. Because of this, using CV books as a primary recruitment strategy will give organizations access to a smaller pool of candidates than posting their positions to Handshake. It is also worth noting that students contacted through this process may not be available and/or interested to take on the internship, which is why we strongly recommend requesting a CV book in addition to posting vacancies on Handshake.

Host a Virtual Information Session

Organizations can host a virtual information session to let students know more about virtual internship opportunities. This is especially important for organizations who have not previously recruited with NYUAD and who are

looking to build their brand on campus. Hosting a virtual session is a quick and easy way to let organizations let potential candidates know about vacancies, as well as potentially recruit candidates directly from the session. We recommend that these sessions are held in conjunction with an existing Handshake job posting.

Virtual information sessions are typically an hour long and held on Zoom. Virtual sessions can be held from 5:30 - 7:30pm Sunday through Wednesday, September through May, to accommodate student class schedules.

Interviewing and Selecting Candidates

Once applications have been reviewed, organizations have the option to shortlist candidates to interview or interview all applicants depending on their timeline and individual needs. Organizations are welcome to contact students directly to schedule interviews, and the CDC is on hand to assist with scheduling interview slots with larger groups of candidates.

Interviewing Virtually

Interviews with potential candidates can be conducted over the phone or virtually using video conference software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. We strongly recommend taking advantage of video chat software to replicate the effectiveness of in-person interviews. Here are some examples of questions that can be asked during the virtual interview:

- *Tell us about yourself and why you are interested in working with our organization*
- *Why did you decide to apply for this role?*
Have you taken on a remote internship in the past?
- *How can you see yourself contributing to our organization?*
What do you expect to gain from an internship with us?
- *What are your strengths and areas of improvement (weaknesses)?*
- *Give an example of a situation during which you worked independently and with minimal supervision to execute a project.*

Additional Screening Activities

An organization may choose to supplement the initial interview with a second round of interviews and/or assign the candidate a writing exercise or case study. Organizations should decide what type of interview process will work best for their organization.

For example, a writing sample can be requested if the intern will be responsible for writing and communicating important information or correspondences. Depending on the writing skills required for the role, organizations can assign a specific prompt or request a sample of the candidate's past written work.

A case study interview can also be utilized as part of the screening process for organizations in the consulting and business industries. These interviews consist of the candidate being presented with a scenario similar to one the organization regularly handles. The candidate is asked to study the problem, perform an analysis and give advice on how they would handle the scenario. Both of these additional screening activities can easily be assigned and executed remotely.

Selecting an Intern

Once the interviewing of all applicants is complete, organizations are encouraged to take time to review their notes and all application materials before deciding on a finalist candidate. Organizations should keep in mind that an intern candidate being selected does not mean that the offer will be accepted.

Extending Offers

Once final selections have been made, organizations are required to detail an internship offer in a letter or email format and send it to the finalist candidate. The following information needs to be included in the offer letter or email:

- Official internship title
- Start and end date of the internship
- Supervisor name
- Supervisor email address

A sample offer letter can be found at the end of this document in Appendix B.

No-Objection Letters

Once offer letters have been extended, the CDC will process and issue No-Objection letters (NOLs) that authorize candidates to begin working with the organization. This process takes up to 3 business days but can be expedited as needed.

Supervising a Virtual Intern

As the internship will be taken on virtually, assigning a supervisor that manages the student closely and thoughtfully throughout the internship is particularly important. The supervisor will be directly responsible for the intern for the duration of the internship. The supervisor should be someone who enjoys working with and mentoring students and who is able to incorporate managing them remotely into their work schedule. The responsibilities of an effective virtual internship supervisor include establishing clear learning goals for the intern, facilitating the internship onboarding and offboarding process, assigning tasks and projects, scheduling regular check ins with the intern, and providing feedback on their work.

Establish a Learning Plan

The internship supervisor should plan to provide the intern with tasks and projects that allow them to develop their skills during the virtual internship experience. We recommend drafting a learning plan to help the supervisor establish clear objectives on what skills, knowledge, and experience the virtual intern will be gaining. Refer to the Sample Internship Learning Plan (Appendix C) for a guide on what this plan can look like.

Onboarding and Orientation

Orienting new interns to any organization is essential when setting the tone within a new work environment, especially a virtual one. Supervisors should plan for the intern's first day to be focused on training to orient them to their new virtual working environment and set the tone for expectations. The orientation can include introducing the intern to their supervisor and other relevant staff members over video conference, acquainting them with the channels that will be used for communication during the internship, discussing the organization and company culture, agreeing on a set work schedule, and going over expectations. A sample intern orientation agenda can be found in Appendix D.

Establish a Set Work Schedule

Supervisors and interns should work together to establish a definitive time allotment per week and per day for virtual internship activities. A mutually agreed upon schedule should clearly outline when the intern will be expected to be online and accessible during their internship. Agreeing upon a schedule in advance and checking in regularly with the intern will help ensure that they remain productive and on track while working remotely.

Assign Tasks and Projects

Ensure that interns are engaged by regularly assigning them tasks and projects and checking in with them periodically to give feedback on their work. Real time feedback and comments on programs such as Google Docs can help the supervisor monitor the intern's progress on assignments as well as give them the opportunity to develop their work. Here are some tips on effectively assigning tasks and projects to virtual interns:

- Be clear and detailed when assigning work. Tasks assigned during virtual internships require adequate and concise briefing even if the task seems straightforward.
- Provide regular and detailed feedback on work performance (both positive and constructive) to allow the intern to develop their skills and keep them on track while they work on tasks and projects remotely.
- Encourage interns to think critically by asking them for suggestions or alternatives when issues arise.
- Reward interns for good work with positive feedback.

Schedule Regular Meetings and Check-ins

Schedule video meetings at least once a week with interns on virtual workspace software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. 'Face to face' meetings can help keep students on track during their virtual internship and ensure that they feel a human connection with their supervisor, as well as instill a sense of accountability.

Offboarding

Effectively offboarding your interns can help close out the internship on a positive note. An effective offboarding strategy can consist of providing feedback to the CDC about their experience supervising their intern and conducting exit interviews with the intern to provide feedback that can help

further develop the internship program for the future.

Provide Feedback to the CDC

We encourage supervisors to complete the [NYUAD Internship Supervisor Survey](#) upon the completion of the internship to give the CDC feedback on working with the virtual intern. The survey allows supervisors to rate their interns performance and share other observations, concerns and feedback. Supervisors who have positive experience with interns are also highly encouraged to provide the intern with a recommendation letter that they can use when applying for future internship and work opportunities.

Conduct Exit Interviews

An exit interview at the end of the internship can give organizations insight into the experience of the intern and help develop the internship program for the future. An exit interview can be conducted as a written exit evaluation that can be completed virtually. Here are a few examples of questions that be asked during the exit interview evaluation:

- *Did the tasks assigned during the internship help the intern develop their skills?*
- *Was the supervision during the internship adequate?*
- *Would interns recommend this organization to other students looking for internship opportunities?*
- *Would interns be interested in working for the organization after graduation?*

A sample exit evaluation can be found at the end of this document in Appendix D.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many hours a week can students intern virtually?

NYUAD students can commit to up to 20 hours per week of virtual internship work during the academic semester. They are able to work full-time (around 40 hours per week) during breaks and the summer period.

Should virtual interns be paid for their work?

Virtual internships can be paid or unpaid at the discretion of the organization. While it is not a requirement that organizations pay interns, it is worth noting that paid opportunities receive more applicant traffic.

What platforms can be used to communicate and work with students during virtual internships?

There are many virtual shared workspaces that can be used to power your internship. [Zoom](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), [Slack](#) and [Google Docs](#) are some examples of channels that can be used. Using software that your organization currently uses is recommended to ensure that the internship program is seamlessly incorporated in the operations of the organization.

What steps can a supervisor take if an intern does not complete a task or is not performing up to expectations?

Scheduling a check in with the intern to explore what happened and discuss next steps is highly encouraged. This will give the intern a chance to explain what happened, create a sense of accountability and help prevent the issue from arising again. If this happens, organizations can use the CDC staff as a resource to assist with rectifying issues when unexpected problems arise.

What is appropriate response time for emails when working virtually?

A recommended expected response time for emails while on call virtually is within the hour. This can vary based on the urgency of the work. Expectations for response times should be made clear at the beginning of the internship.

How much checking in is necessary with the intern?

The number of times a supervisor checks in with their virtual intern varies depending on the nature of the work being assigned. We recommend checking in with the virtual intern at the beginning and end of their shift and

touching base throughout the shift as needed.

How can an organization ensure that virtual interns comply with non-disclosure agreements and/or security measures?

Trust is more of an asset in the virtual context, but organizations can consider VPN restricted access to data, time-limited access to information, and/or organization email accounts (rather than student email accounts) to reinforce accountability. A confidentiality agreement template can be found in Appendix E.

What are the expectations the university has for professional behavior?

The CDC expects that all students will conduct themselves in a trustworthy, respectful and responsible manner during internships and are held to professional conduct guidelines. Organizations are encouraged to get in touch with the CDC Employer Relations team if they have concerns with the professional conduct of their virtual intern.

Contact Us

Contact our Employer Relations team for further assistance with recruiting NYUAD student talent virtually.

Phone: 02-6284241

Email: nyuad.employer@nyu.edu

Resources

APPENDIX A: Sample Intern Job Description

Marketing and Communications Intern

Terms Required:	Fall and Spring
Location(s):	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Description:	<p>We are looking for an energetic and self-motivated Marketing Intern to join our marketing department. If you are looking to build a career in social media and content marketing, then we want to work with you. Your work will include preparing promotional presentations, monitoring social platforms, and conducting market analysis. This is a virtual internship and the work will be conducted remotely.</p> <p>Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perform market analysis and research on the latest trends• Design and present new social media campaign ideas• Monitor social media platforms for trending news, ideas, and feedback• Prepare detailed promotional presentations Help with the planning and hosting of marketing events• Research and evaluate competitor marketing and digital content• Contribute to the creation of mock-ups, email campaigns, and social media content
Desired Class Level:	Third Year (Junior)
Posting Date:	20 September 20XX
Expiration Date:	15 October 20XX
Approximate Hours Per Week:	Up to 20 hours per week (to be negotiated upon appointment)

Qualifications:	<p>Skill requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with marketing computer software and social media platforms • Good understanding of the latest marketing trends and techniques • Excellent verbal and written communication skills • Must have a passion for marketing • Outstanding multitasking abilities
Contact:	<p>Staff member, position title Phone and email address</p>
Application materials:	<p>CV, Cover Letter</p>

APPENDIX B: Sample Offer Letter

[**Organization Name**] is pleased to offer you an educational internship opportunity as a [**Title or Role**] intern. You will report directly to [**Supervisor Name and Title**]. This is a virtual internship position and the supervision and work will be conducted remotely.

For this position, your major duties will include [**brief description of job responsibilities**]. Your schedule will be approximately [**number of hours**] per week beginning [**MM/DD/YY**]. Your assignment will conclude on [**MM/DD/YY**].

Signed,

[Student Name and Signature]
[University Name]

[Supervisor Name and Signature]
[Organization Name]

APPENDIX C: Sample Internship Learning Plan

Learning Objectives & Goals	Plan to Achieve the Objectives & Goals	Assess the Objectives & Goals
List the skills, knowledge, and experience your intern will gain from this internship experience:	List the ways in which you plan to have your intern achieve these objectives and goals:	Describe how you plan to evaluate or assess your intern on the completion of these goals:
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

For Intern:

For Supervisor:

(Signature & Date)

(Signature & Date)

I received, and was able to provide, feedback 1 2 3 4 5

I met regularly with my supervisor 1 2 3 4 5

This internship gave me a realistic preview of my field of interest 1 2 3 4 5

The internship program met my expectations 1 2 3 4 5

Please answer the following questions with as much detail as possible:

- A. Please comment on the internship recruitment process. How did you find out about the internship program? How was the interview and selection process for you?
- B. Would you recommend this internship to other students? Why or why not?
- C. In what ways has this internship helped you develop your skills, career goals, personal awareness, and knowledge?
- D. How can this internship be improved for future students?
- E. What courses and skills did you find most useful in this internship?
- F. What did you like most about this internship? What did you like least?
- G. What is your overall evaluation of this internship program?

APPENDIX E: Sample Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement for Virtual Interns in [Organization Name]

I understand that I may have access to confidential client information and confidential information about [Organization Name] during my virtual internship. I understand that this confidential information is protected in every form, such as written records and correspondence, oral communications, and computer programs and applications. I agree to comply with all existing and future policies and procedures to protect the confidentiality of this information. I agree not to use, copy, make notes regarding, remove, release, or disclose confidential information, unless it is permitted.

I agree not to allow any other person to have access to [Organization Name]'s information systems under my authentication codes, devices, and passwords. I agree to notify the appropriate administrator immediately if I become aware that another person has access to my authentication codes, devices, and passwords, or otherwise has unauthorized access to the information system or records. I agree that my obligations under this Agreement continue after my employment or my time as a virtual intern ends.

Student Name _____

(Signature)

Date _____

Supervisor Name _____

(Signature)

Date _____