Supervising Remote Interns: A Guide for Site Supervisors

Please find below a set of tips for working with your students at all stages of the internship including **onboarding**, **orientation**, and **ongoing** work and supervision, feedback, and evaluation. Even in a remote work environment, we ask supervisors to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to perform lawyering tasks and for supervisors to provide ongoing feedback and evaluations. The work assigned to the student must be of sufficient amount and quality to engage the student in a substantial lawyering experience that is reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer engaging in lawyering tasks at your organization. We hope that this document serves as a quick overview of the best practices involved in working with developing lawyers. This document is not meant to be comprehensive but might help you generate ideas and new habits to ensure that you are making the most of the relationship with your new intern(s) in a remote environment.

General Tips that Apply Throughout Your Relationship with the Intern

- **Acknowledge the challenging situation we are all facing as individuals, as workers, and as a profession**. Acknowledging both your personal challenges and stresses around working remotely, and creating an environment where your intern feels welcome to share their own circumstances, will go a long way towards setting the intern at ease and building a more trusted, authentic relationship.

- **Consider how to create a work schedule and work environment that encourages creativity and flexibility in how the work gets done**. Experiment with different communications channels such as Slack or text messaging; try non-traditional work schedules; determine ways to share work virtually and to stay in touch with one another's progress.

- **Communicate as much as possible by videoconference rather than email/text.** There is a tremendous loss of connection from moving out of the office and into a virtual world. Establishing a regular opportunity to see one another's body language and facial expressions, and to demonstrate your general accessibility will help to enhance communication and to ensure that you and the intern are having the best experience possible. This is important for both one-on-one supervision and for overall team building.

Onboarding Tips (i.e. Pre-Planning Prior to Start Date)

Communicate with Your Student Before They Arrive:

1. **Start and End Date:** Ensure it is clear to both the student and organization.

2. **Expectations about Work Hours:** Agree to whether the intern is planning to work full-time or part-time based on the student's expectations and the organization's needs. Ask about your intern's preferred work hours. When working from home, you may have to adjust the traditional day because of other personal responsibilities, the hours a student/supervisor may consider to be the most productive, and time zone differences. (Note that you may want to periodically check in about this as preferences/needs may change/evolve over time on both the intern's and supervisor's end.)

3. **Home Office Set-Up:** Does the student have a designated work space; a private or shared computer; access to a printer? This will be just a start to a longer conversation taking place during Orientation (see below), and will touch on issues of confidentiality and other ethical obligations. It can also serve to help you understand some of the obstacles students may be navigating when completing assignments.

4. **Student Information**
    a. Preferred names or nicknames
    b. Preferred pronouns
    c. Other helpful information to introduce student to organization/other interns
    d. Photo to share
    e. Basic background or resume information

5. **Goals**
    a. Encourage students to think about their learning goals for the internship.
    b. Think about your organizational goals and how the intern fits in, and share some of your thoughts about ways the intern can both work towards their personal goals and achieve organizational objectives.

Pre-Arrival Preparation Before Student's Start Date

1. **Integration and Technology**
    a. Get the student set up in your various systems, including an email address, access to the VPN, calendaring, etc. Think about how the student will connect to files and technology programs.
    b. Consider the legal research and other technology programs the student will need to access in order to work on assignments. This may require you to set up additional user accounts or to obtain special credentials.
    c. Give the student information about downloading any necessary apps or programs to be able scan, fax, share files, or otherwise engage in other work of the organization.

2. **Share placement resources to review before orientation, such as website highlights, annual report, etc.**

3. **Think about how you plan to conduct supervision remotely**
   a. What is your style as a supervisor? Are you more directive and hands-on, or rather prefer to have the student figure things out on their own?
   b. How and from whom the student can expect to receive assignments?
   c. How and from whom the student can expect to receive feedback?
   d. How and when will the student be able to communicate with you? Be realistic about your own work habits, personal obligations, and preferred mode of communication.
   e. Think about whether you want to build in a regular check-in with the student into your calendar.

4. **Consider how you will train/orient and welcome the student**
   a. If you usually have a welcome coffee/lunch, can you schedule a delivery to their house, or set up a group Zoom meeting?
   b. Can you email a welcome note from the Executive Director (ED) or Board Chair?
   c. Are there some on-demand trainings you can line up? Or shared trainings with other agencies? Can you designate certain hours to give substantive trainings?
   d. Can you coordinate with colleagues to conduct some of the orientation in order to expose the student to as many people in the organization as possible?

5. **Consider the first set of assignments, including**
   a. Pressing assignments (due dates, sources of information, samples to consider, how to get started, who to ask questions of, etc.).
   b. "Backburner" projects or assignments that the student can work on during down time, or time when s/he/they is waiting for feedback or the next assignment.
   c. Diversity in Assignments - Try to think about a variety of assignments to offer the student, keeping in mind that students should be engaging in work similar to that of a first year attorney:
      1. For example, research and writing could consist of memos, contracts, litigation documents, legislation/policy work, case summaries, article summaries, client communication, notes from trainings, and presentation prep, a know-your-rights curriculum, articles about the work of the organization for external publications to publish as part of an advocacy strategy among other ideas.
      2. Rapid response work can also be useful.
      3. Consider observation opportunities, especially coupled with a debrief.
      4. Consider whether the student can hone oral advocacy skills by doing any formal or informal presentations.
      5. Group projects among interns can also be instructive and are a way to foster community and collaboration.

   Think about how the nature and substance of the work that students typically engage in will need to be adapted.

Orientation Tips (i.e., The First Days)

Introductions/Overview

1. **Welcome**
   a. Make sure the student knows what you have planned for their arrival and talk them through the 'roadmap' of Orientation – today, tomorrow and down the road.

   b. Set up a process for interns to meet each other, including an icebreaker for all, for small groups, for teams, etc.

   c. Introduce students to key players. Ask attorneys to do a 1-2 minute video introducing themselves or schedule a group Zoom meeting and ask each attorney and staff member to provide a brief introduction at the start of call. This will help the student understand what the office works on and how they accomplish it.

   d. Do a virtual tour of the office - if anyone is in the office, ask them to make a video of the space to give them a physical sense of the place. If there isn't anyone in the office, are there pictures or video of the office you can share or a floor plan of assigned offices?

   e. Be thoughtful about meetings that students can do with individual attorneys/staff.

   f. Plan a "welcome lunch" or "welcome coffee" with a few select staff.

2. **Overview**:
   a. Spend time introducing your organization - if you gave them information before they arrived, perhaps they can be asked to review it and ask any outstanding questions they may have after reviewing the material.

   b. Talk about how students will fit into the office structure this summer; e.g., everything in the office or a particular legal team's work?

3. **Review Administrative Policies/Procedures**
   a. Explain how certain relevant processes/tasks get done at your placement.

   b. Review how communication will happen – office email, slack channel, etc.

   c. Explain organizational structure such as IT, HR, etc.

   d. Review discrimination and harassment policies.

   e. If the student requires accommodations, work with HLS and HR to address their needs.

4. **Review Legal Projects including big picture/context, and specific assignments**

5. **Substantive Training**
   a. Provide the student with access to any internal trainings.

   b. Invite the student to participate in any CLEs or other online trainings covering the substantive areas of the work.

   c. Schedule time with other staff members to train the intern(s) in those substantive areas.

   d. Encourage students to do their own research in order to familiarize themselves with contemporary cases/news in the substantive areas.

   e. Be sure to build in time for students to ask questions after they have done the necessary preparation and review.

6**. Ethics training: Confidentiality, Conflicts, and Competence**
   a. HLS requires all students participating in clinics to complete an online ethics training which focuses on confidentiality, conflicts, and competence. This can be a good starting point for students to think about these ethical obligations and is available to any student with a Harvard University ID (HUID).

   b. Check in with students about these ethical obligations with a focus on the unique aspects of confidentiality in a remote environment; e.g., students should use headphones for all calls if they don't live alone; they should have a "clean desk" policy to not leave work exposed; they shouldn't be speaking in earshot of a listening device (e.g., Alexa); they should be using password protected file sharing, especially if they are working on a shared computer, etc.

   c. Inform students how to properly transfer electronic files while protecting confidentiality.

   d. Be sure the student understands the student's obligations concerning how to safeguard and manage high risk confidential information.

7. **Explain your process of assigning and receiving the student's work**
   a. Who will be assigning work?

   b. How will they get work?

   c. Think about how students should ask their questions (e.g., daily emails with all of their questions in one document, text, etc.).

8. **Establish a Plan for Saving Documents, etc.**

   Explain how you would like the intern to save and share their work. Are there certain naming formats? Should they email or upload their work product?

Ongoing Tips (i.e., Throughout the Internship)

Community building

1. Plan some fun activities that could increase social connections between interns and between the interns and other staff.
2. Have some happy hours or lunch meetings where people are sharing personal stories, rather than work.
3. Plan a trivia or Pictionary gathering, or one of many online games that are now available.
4. Consider assigning group or collaborative projects so that students get to know one another.
5. Host a virtual coffee chat to discuss jobs in your field, useful connections and associations, and offer other networking and mentoring advice to students.

Supervision

1. Set Up Regular Check-Ins – Ideally, these check-ins will be held weekly, by video, at a set day/time.

2. Set an agenda (or ask your student to do so after the first couple of meetings) for each meeting including a personal and professional check-in:

    i. How things are going generally (for you and the student)
    ii. Workload
    iii. Status of communication with each other and other supervisors
    iv. Assessment of student's hours/commitment
    v. Progress towards student goals
    vi. Answer questions about assignments and projects
    vii. Deliver feedback
    viii. Explain new assignments

3. Ask for the student to summarize the status of assignments at the end of the day or end of the week, if that process makes sense for you, to keep you both accountable to one another and to increase communication.

4. Include students in virtual calls/meetings as much as possible: When you can, plan ahead and notify the student of such meetings so they can be available or shift something around if needed. Students will really miss the camaraderie of an office and the ability to "tag along" with supervisors.

    a. Think about setting project deadlines even if there is flexibility for when it must be completed to give students goal posts.
    b. Provide students with context for their assignments so that they know why the work is important.

Feedback

1. Explain how the student will get feedback and from whom. It could be part of the weekly meetings, or happen on an assignment-by-assignment basis.

2. Think about sharing feedback in multiple ways: written, oral, track changes v. finished product, comment bubbles vs. redlining text, etc.

3. Schedule a call for feedback immediately or soon after key meetings that the student participates in, including interacting with clients, giving a presentation, or otherwise performing law-related tasks.

Evaluation

1. Explain how the student will get evaluated and by whom;

2. Will it be at the mid-and end-point, or just at the end? Will it be written or in the form of a final meeting?

ADDENDUM A:

Remote Internship Checklist

Onboarding Tips

- ❏ Set up a call/videoconference meeting with your student to get to know one another and to cover the basics.
- ❏ Establish a work schedule with your intern, including set "office hours" when each will plan to be available during a regular week as well as clear start and end dates.
- ❏ Provide students remote access to email and necessary systems and documents.
- ❏ Share resources and information for students to read ahead of time.
- ❏ Determine a supervision and assignment structure.

Orientation Tips

- ❏ Plan and hold a remote orientation.
- ❏ Be explicit about the support structure of your program (supervisor, coordinator, mentor, technical support, etc.).
- ❏ Provide opportunities for students to get to know your office and coworkers - help them create a network.
- ❏ Conduct an ethics training, including a review of confidentiality and security concerns involved in working from home.
- ❏ Hand out some early assignments, including observations, trainings, and substantive written work.
- ❏ Be sure students know how to access necessary documents, programs etc. to be able to do their work effectively.

Ongoing Tips

- ❏ Hold regularly-scheduled, weekly one-on-one video conference meetings with your intern.
- ❏ Be creative in finding opportunities for student observation of unique experiences (i.e. hearings).
- ❏ Provide a variety of substantive remote work assignments.
- ❏ Provide enough remote work for your student to complete their hours.
- ❏ Give students short-term and long-term projects.
- ❏ Give substantive feedback, written and orally.
- ❏ Create space to monitor the progress of student goals and the remote experience.
- ❏ Near the conclusion, provide an opportunity for student and supervisor evaluation.
- ❏ Be flexible with student needs.
- ❏ Create community.

ADDENDUM B:

Internship Assignment Clarification Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you cover all the relevant topics for the particular task you are assigning:

- ❏ How does this assignment fit into the overall case? How will the final product be used?
- ❏ Where can the student access the case file/documents?
- ❏ How long should the student spend on this project?
- ❏ When is the draft/final product of this assignment due? Are there interim due dates to make sure that the project is on target.
- ❏ What priority does this assignment have vis-à-vis other projects the student is working on?
- ❏ What format should the student use for the final product?
- ❏ Are there examples of this type of work product to provide?
- ❏ What other materials (such as a research log or copies of cases) should the student include in the final product?
- ❏ Where should the student start the research? Is there a good treatise or hornbook to recommend?
- ❏ At what stage or date should you meet to discuss progress on this project?
- ❏ Whom should the student ask for assistance if you are not available?
- ❏ Ask for the student to sum up (verbally or in writing) what you are asking the student to do, to make sure you are both communicating well.