



Online placements

The outbreak of the pandemic and restrictive restrictions prevented students from undertaking normal and standard work experience or placements, which deepened their knowledge and allowed them to familiarize themselves with the practical aspects of the profession they were studying. Many universities were wondering how to give students full access to knowledge and appropriate qualifications, as it was in previous years. Many companies have also faced a difficult challenge of how to organise good professional placements in difficult pandemic conditions.

In Poland, online placements were not popular. 2020 - the year the pandemic began, encouraged many employers to convert their placement offer from stationary to remote or hybrid. For many companies it was a great challenge and a new experience.

Harvard Business School and College-Workforce Transitions decided to meet students and companies and published good practices, i.e., how to successively find a good online placement that will bring a lot to your future career and how such placements should be carried out by employers.¹

Here are some aspects that companies should pay attention to when creating a good virtual work placement. The same should be applied to newly hired employees, especially young people for whom this is their first job:

- **Clear communication**

Clear communication is essential, the company should work to ensure that all stakeholders are well informed about plans for the future, even if these plans evolve in a rapidly changing situation. When a virtual placement becomes part of these plans, it is important to ensure that the students taking part in the placement also know what to expect and at what time this is crucial. Clear and decisive action combined with direct communication with students brings benefits even when the details of a remote, virtual or hybrid placement are not yet finalised.

- **Designing a virtual work placement**

To design an effective virtual placement, you need to look at what has been successful with your on-site placement and what work placements at other companies look like. It is worth using good examples and experiences. Think about how you can create an online/network support structure and mentoring for continuing education.

It is important to choose projects that are relevant or noteworthy to a large group. This ensures that many people in the organisation are committed to the students' success, and also broadens the range of mentors available who are knowledgeable about the project and can step in and help regardless of time zones.

¹ Developed on the basis of <https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/insights-and-advice/blog/post/best-practices-for-creating-a-successful-virtual-internship/> accessed 20.05.2022



• Remote onboarding

Onboarding trainees won't be filled with office handshakes and team lunches. However, you can effectively bring trainees online and make them feel inclusive from day one with an effective process and ongoing support. For example:

- assigning a trainee's supervisor, with whom contact is online all the time,
- organisation of introductory and "partner" meetings with teammates for trainees,
- making all-important guides, procedures and tips available online that will allow trainees to familiarise themselves with the company's culture.

• Virtual team management

Technology has made remote work easier than ever before. There are many tools like Zoom, Slack, Microsoft Teams, Basecamp, and Google Drive to help teams collaborate. For students, these are very well-known platforms. They know them from school where lessons were held remotely in 2020 and 2021. This form of lessons even forced students to effectively familiarise themselves with such communication platforms. However, in various industries, remote teams have been around for decades, and it is effective management based on support and trust that largely determines the success of these organisations. It's also important to set clear communication expectations. If your team has a default mode of communication, make sure trainees are well informed about what channels to use and when. They need to know the channels, form, reporting system, how their work will be monitored and evaluated. What's more, they need to know the "virtual places" where they are supposed to leave the products of their work. It is important that each trainee or groups of trainees have their own Placement Supervisor, whom they can contact directly in relation to any organisational, technical or substantive matter.

• Find a solution for yourself

As you continue to manage your virtual trainees, evaluate what worked and what could be improved. We learn a lesson from each case. We learn from our mistakes. Good examples are not always matched to the capabilities of our company, the capabilities of our teams or our industry.

Students should also know how to look for a good virtual placement and what to look out for.²

² Opracowano na podstawie <https://ccwt.wceruw.org/exploring-virtual-internships-key-tips-for-students/> z dnia 20.05.2022



- **Looking for virtual work placements**

Several companies have sprung up that offer platforms through which employers can run their work placement programs. Examples of these are:

- ✓ <https://www.virtualinternships.com/>
- ✓ <https://www.theinterngroup.com/>
- ✓ <https://www.theforage.com/>

Many companies announce work placement offers directly on their websites or social media, which are worth following. There you will also find an evaluation of the work placement by previous students.

- **Identifying relevant values and expectations**

It should be as clear as possible in the application what motivates the candidate to work for a particular company, what skills and competences they have, and why they believe that working for this company will be mutually beneficial. One piece of advice is to make a list of value propositions. It is also important to prepare answers about what, as a candidate, we hope to gain from this experience and what benefits it can bring us in career development.

- **Rules and choice of virtual work placement**

It is important that the rules of the work placement are clearly defined:

- form,
- placement hours,
- type and scope of work,
- technical support,
- provided equipment and appropriate training.

Ideally, by the end of each interview, the candidate will have a clear understanding of the tasks and the learning and training opportunities that will be provided.

Thanks to many experiences and the development of correct schemes for good remote work placements, students are very willing to use this type of professional development. However, despite the vast knowledge that has been gained about what they should look like, these programs still need to be improved with new possibilities and innovative approaches being constantly implemented.