

Suggested Practices for Site Supervisors

The following are some common-sense suggested practices for supervisors working with graduate interns to help welcome and mentor them—not unlike orientation activities for any newly hired information professional. Keep in mind that internships are a time of learning, observing and taking part in day-to-day activities in an information agency, and making connections between theory and real-world practice. As supervisors, you are the teachers and shapers of the intern’s professional outlook and demeanor—what a gift and a challenge!

- Have an initial interview with the intern to determine personal goals and any pertinent strengths or gaps. Set “*Goals and Objectives*” with the intern. (This is a required written assignment for all beginning interns).
- Set aside time regularly (weekly, bi-weekly) to meet with the intern about the internship specifically, the profession generally, to address questions or concerns, and to share information. Take advantage of other opportunities to chat with the intern about this experience less formally whenever possible.
- Creating a space for your intern, even if this is a shared space or simply a desk available for use on the days when the intern is on site. This practice helps welcome the intern and makes them feel a part of the institution.
- Introduce the intern to the administration and staff. This simple step will make the intern’s first day more pleasurable, familiarize the intern with whom to consult for different needs that might arise, and help co-workers understand who the “new face” is and the intern’s role.
- Remember to pass along to the intern any appropriate “nuts and bolts” information about parking, break time, lunch hour—including nearby restaurants and places to sit or prepare food brought from home—and any other details that may improve the experience, which may not be included in formal orientation.
- Acquaint the intern with the site’s policies, procedures, and regulations. This is particularly relevant to the institution’s policies and requirements for retention and promotion, as interns must be aware very quickly of professional development requirements in the future. As you prepare the department’s quarter-end evaluation form of the intern’s progress, please mirror your institutional evaluation process. A first performance evaluation experience during an internship will be greatly appreciated by the intern.
- Acquaint the intern with the site’s goals and the clientele it serves. Be sure to share the institution’s goals and mission statement with the intern. Make the intern aware of any other departments, divisions, and agencies that engage with your institution.

- Assist the intern in selecting activities to participate in or observe (and be clear about which of these they should be doing). Engage interns in activities that meet their educational goals, enrich the experience, and/or are unique to your site.
- Follow the activities of the intern, giving frequent opportunities to discuss reactions and concerns through individual and group conferences. Give clear and constructive feedback on the intern's work product. Be mindful that interns may have good suggestions to offer, too, for process improvement, new policies, etc.
- Help the intern connect theory to practice by discussing explicitly how on-site work relates/applies to professional principles, as well as broader theories and concepts.
- Introduce the intern to the professional community by encouraging attendance at meetings, workshops, etc. These might include meetings at the site and/or outside workshops. Professional organizations and associations are very important to information institutions and to information professionals. Alert the intern to those that are most relevant and of greatest importance to the site.
- If appropriate, arrange for the intern to "interview" the other professionals at your site to find out about their backgrounds, subject expertise, interests, etc., to gain a sense of commonalities and differences among information professionals working within the institution.
- Whenever possible, share your professional philosophy with the intern, to provide opportunities to observe and to understand how theory and practice challenge each other.
- Alert the intern to professional reading you deem valuable to remain current in the profession generally, as well as reading pertinent to your site.
- Internships can serve as a "probationary period," and actually hiring an intern into an open position can be mutually beneficial. Internship experiences can ready graduates for success in this process, and minimize the stress and anxiety of the job search after graduate school. Share information about your institution's hiring process, and conduct a practice interview with the intern for a position at your institution. Be sure to provide objective feedback and constructive suggestions to help the intern develop excellent responses to interview questions.
- Above all, regard the intern as a professional-in-training who may acquire a first impression of professional practice from you and your library or information agency.