

# Tips & Strategies – Internship Workplace Supervision

LFS 496 Career Development Internships

---

## What is a Career Development Internship?

The goal of the LFS Career Development Internship is to prepare students professionally and academically for future careers through mentored experience in the workplace.

## What is a Work Placement Supervisor?

Students are supported by the work placement supervisor to successfully carry out activities in the workplace that meet the defined goals of your organization while also contributing to student learning. Students are also supported by UBC staff in reflective activities and leadership training.

Your role as a work placement supervisor is to:

- Coordinate the internship posting with UBC;
- Review applications and interview top candidates;
- Finalize responsibilities and registration form with the selected student;
- Support students in completing their work placement duties and learning objectives;
- Support students in developing employability skills and work ethic, including providing constructive feedback through the internship (an evaluation rubric will be sent to you twice per internship). The course instructor assigns the final grade, but it is your responsibility to inform the instructor of any concerns or highlights.

## Strategies for Successful Supervision and Mentoring

As a work placement supervisor, your role is two-fold: to support the student's work placement and to keep your own organization running smoothly. Here are some strategies to consider:

### 1- PLAN AHEAD

The internship posting and registration form provide a basic internship profile. These tasks can shift (and this is usually OK), but as much as possible, know what tasks you will have the intern do before the intern arrives. Ask yourself: *What documents, training, or tools are needed to understand this role or task? Do I need to check in with anybody else before implementing this project phase?* Addressing these questions in advance will help maximize your efficiency as a team.

### 2- SCHEDULE APPROPRIATELY

Spending a little extra time at the outset to clarify roles can increase the overall contribution of the intern. Stay open to questions by using strategies such as giving as much initial information as possible, fielding a few questions, and then discussing additional ones while doing the work. You can also use prompts such as: *We can keep discussing this as we start working. Let's park this question for now but remind me when we're harvesting.*

### 3- GENERATE GROUP DISCUSSION

Generate group discussion with questions like: *What do you know about this already? Who feels confident demonstrating?* This provides students with different perspectives to learn from. It also fosters a sense of inclusivity and creates a safe space to experiment. From a supervisor's perspective, it allows you to get a sense of the student's level of expertise.

#### **4- CLEARLY DELINEATE PARAMETERS**

Don't assume the intern knows how to keep kale bunch sizes consistent or how much time to spend on a literature review. Establishing time, quality, and scope parameters is a key aspect of work efficiency. Promote teamwork with prompts like: *Let's radio together to check in about the kale. Let's chat on the phone next week to review the number hours you've spend on the project.*

#### **5- IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP ROLES**

Ensure that it is clear who has leadership over which tasks. It is helpful for students to have a sense of ownership over certain aspects of a project, but it is as important for them to learn that certain tasks require more experience. If working on a long-term project, consider asking the intern to create a spreadsheet of actions, deadlines, and associated leaders.

#### **6- MODEL GOOD WORK TECHNIQUE, BEHAVIOUR, AND VALUES**

Respond to emails in a timely manner. Promote respectful communication. Be reliable with follow-through and responsibility. Showcase good work ethic through efficacy and efficiency. And most importantly, have fun, be flexible, laugh and work together when sharing difficult tasks.

#### **7- SUPPORT HOLISTIC SYSTEMS THINKING**

Include time in your mentoring to ensure interns get the context behind a problem and its broader implications. Support the intern in reaching out to other experts to develop a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving. Emphasize the importance of building common ground across age, ability, political views, socioeconomic status, culture, belief, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender.

#### **8- DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS REGULARLY**

Check in about expectations throughout the internship with scheduled meetings to discuss things like: *Is there anything you feel you wanted to learn and haven't yet? Are you experiencing any equipment or people problems that represent obstacles to your learning? Let's go back to your initial work placement learning objectives, do you feel like you're on the right track?*

#### **9- PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**

Providing feedback is a key responsibility as a work placement mentor. It is your responsibility to make sure that you communicate in ways that allow the receiver to understand what it is that you are saying. Here are some constructive feedback best practices:

- Before addressing any issues, ask permission to speak directly about what you see, e.g., *[Name], can I give you some feedback?* By asking permission, you deflect the initial defensive reaction to criticism and open the door to better communication.
- When giving feedback to correct a behavior, be constructive by mentioning specific examples and using the first person: *I've noticed that in the past week, you've arrived at 10am instead of 9am as we agreed (as opposed to: You're always late).* Mention how that behavior affects you or your organization: *When you arrive late, it delays our team in accomplishing that task.*
- End with what you want in the future: *In the future, please arrive on time every day. If this is a problem, please let me know.* Be open to further discussion. Ask the intern to tell you, in their own words, what they heard from you. In doing so, you make sure that what you said was not misinterpreted. Do not leave people feeling defensive or guilty. Emphasise that mistakes are part of how we learn. Thank the person for allowing you to be honest.