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## **A Guide for Students Working Remotely**

Please find below a set of tips for working remotely at all stages of the internship including **onboarding**, **orientation**, and **ongoing** work and supervision, feedback, and evaluation. Even in a remote work environment, your supervisor should provide you with multiple opportunities to perform lawyering tasks, as well as give you ongoing feedback and evaluation. Your supervisor is required to provide you with work that is of sufficient amount and quality to engage you in a substantial lawyering experience that is reasonably similar to the experience of a lawyer engaging in lawyering tasks at the host organization. We hope that this document serves as a guide for you, to know about some best practices and to be able to self-advocate for your own learning experience.

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### General Tips that Apply Throughout Your Relationship with the Host Site

- **Acknowledge and communicate about the challenging situation we are all facing as individuals, as workers, and as a profession.** Both students and supervisors are experiencing new and unique personal challenges and stresses around working remotely. Take some time to share with your supervisor about how you have adapted your work habits and style to the current circumstances. Being candid and transparent about your new obligations and limitations from the beginning will give your supervisor the ability to set appropriate expectations around work hours and assignments. It's also important for you to try to understand your supervisor's other obligations and to try to work within those limitations as well.
- **Work with your supervisor to create a work schedule and work environment that encourages creativity and flexibility in how the work gets done.** Learn about the different communications channels at your office such as Slack or text messaging; work with your supervisor to create a schedule that works for your placement and for your yourself; and determine with one another ways to share work virtually and to stay in touch. Talk with your supervisor about how to arrange your work schedule to most effectively complete your work projects and to fit with your personal responsibilities at home. Of course, prior to talking to your supervisor, spend a little time thinking about how you work best: e.g., What time of day are you most productive? Do you prefer a set routine, or to be flexible? Knowing yourself and your work habits will go a long way towards making the conversation productive.

- **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 your host organization are having the best experience possible. Don't hesitate to suggest a video meeting, even for small matters, in order to best replicate the experience you would have dropping by someone's office or bumping into a co-worker in the hall. At the same time, Zoom fatigue is a real thing, so be honest about your communication preferences (and be open to your supervisor's preferences) in order to ensure that you are able to build a positive communication pattern overall.
- **This is YOUR opportunity to learn.** Unlike many of your other courses, what you get out of this experience is, in some significant way, in your hands rather than your professor's or supervisor's. You will need to set learning goals for yourself by identifying the concrete experiences or skills you want exposure to. And you will need to "manage up" and self-advocate to ensure that you are getting the quality and type of experiences you want/need to reach your learning goals. In a remote environment when you don't have regular in-person contact with your supervisor, you may need to consciously confront any awkwardness you feel about being an intern/student (e.g., that you are bothering people, or that your supervisor has more important things to do) to get the most out of the experience. Keep in mind that your supervisor has invited you to be part of the team, so recognizes the value you bring to the table. It is important for you to likewise recognize your own value. Offering to take on tasks, or thinking creatively and proactively about the work that needs to get done, will show your supervisor that you can contribute in meaningful ways and will likely lead to more robust and engaging projects. Finally, we encourage you to "lean in" to the unusual circumstances. Many remote practices could be here to stay, and you could have a hand in creating new processes or standards at this incredible time of change. Be open to the new possibilities as well as to how you can contribute your energy/ideas as the legal profession evolves!

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

### Communicate with your Supervisor Before the Start:

1. **Start and end dates:** Communicate your start and end dates to your direct supervisor and the organization. Don't assume that details like this are as clear to the supervisor as they are to you. Your supervisors are busy and not in the same "academic" mindset that you are. Put details like this into emails, as well as verbal conversations, so that there is no chance of misunderstanding.
2. **Expectations about work hours:** Agree to your overall work commitment; e.g., number of hours per week and the total number of weeks you are committing to. Ask about your supervisor's preferred work hours, both for them and for you. (With both students and many supervisors working remotely, from different time zones potentially, the regular 9:00-5:00 schedule might not be the most obvious one.) 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:** Think about your home office set up. Do you 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. Please note that if you live in a shared space there are unique ethical issues presented by this work environment and it's necessary for you to think through these issues and any other space/equipment needs and limitations with your supervisor ahead of time. Please note HLS is providing support to students facing challenges related to internet access and other critical technology. Eligibility for these grants will be determined according to financial need. See application here: [https://harvardlaw.formstack.com/forms/tech\\_grant\\_application](https://harvardlaw.formstack.com/forms/tech_grant_application)
4. **Student information:** Share with your supervisor:
  - a. Preferred names or nicknames
  - b. Preferred pronouns
  - c. Other information helpful to introduce student to organization/other interns
  - d. Photo of yourself to share with other colleagues
  - e. Basic background or resume information
5. **Goals**
  - a. Reflect upon and discuss with your supervisor your learning goals for the internship.
  - b. Inquire about your organization's mission and how you (keeping in mind your personal goals) will be able to make a contribution to the organization's work.

**6. Inquire about your supervisor's supervision style**

- a. Is the supervisor more directive and hands-on, or do they prefer to have students figure things out for themselves?
- b. How and from whom can you expect to receive assignments?
- c. How and from whom can you expect to receive feedback?
- d. By which means and how frequently should you communicate with the supervisor?
- e. Establish a regular check-in on the calendar so that it happens more frequently and consistently than ad hoc meetings.

**7. Integration and technology**

- a. Confer with your supervisor about how you can get set up in the organization's various systems, including an email address, access to the VPN, calendaring, etc. Your supervisor will take the lead on this but you can always volunteer to reach out to an office manager or IT person to help with this process.
- b. Consider the legal research and other technology programs you will need to access in order to work on assignments.
- c. Familiarize yourself with the research resources available through the HLS library.
- d. Find out if you should download any necessary apps or programs to be able scan, fax, share files, or otherwise engage in the work of the organization.

- 8. Request placement resources to review before orientation, such as website highlights, annual report, etc.** This is important not only for context or to learn necessary substantive information, but also to demonstrate your engagement and interest in the work of the organization.

- 9. Assignments:** Ask your supervisor about any definite assignments to expect, or the general nature of any work. Seek out a diversity in assignments with a variety of work types and tasks. It can also be helpful to have some "backburner" projects that you can work on in moments of downtime, when you feel a need to focus on something different, or when you are waiting for feedback from a supervisor on another assignment.

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

While nearly all of the actions to welcome and orientate you to your new position is the responsibility of your supervisor and host organization, it is also important to self-advocate and at times, to “manage up.” To that end, here are some specific steps you can expect your supervisor to take, and for you to inquire about, if they don’t happen:

### 1. **Welcome and Overview:**

- a. Your supervisor should hold an orientation meeting on your first day and at the latest, by your first week. This should cover at a minimum a “roadmap” of your training and orientation. It should also cover introductions to other staff and key players in the organization, as well as introduction to other interns.
- b. Ask for an organizational chart. This can be incredibly helpful to know how the units are divided or who your supervisor’s boss is. It may also help you to see how other personnel are situated relative to one another. This is also a good way to see how you/your internship fits into the organizational structure.

### 2. **Administrative Policies/Procedures:** Your supervisor should cover, at a minimum:

- a. How certain relevant processes/tasks get done at your placement.
- b. How communication will happen – office email, slack channel, etc.
- c. The organization’s discrimination and harassment policies.
- d. If you need accommodations, Clinic students are encouraged to access resources made available through Student Support Services in the Dean of Students Office in order to fully participate in all clinical opportunities.  
<https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/dos/student-support/>.

### 3. **Ethics training: Confidentiality, Conflicts, and Competence**

- a. HLS requires all students participating in clinics at the law school participate in an on-line ethics training which focuses on confidentiality, conflicts, and competence. Please make sure you have watched this training. You can access it with your Harvard University ID (HUID). Or contact OCP at [clinical@law.harvard.edu](mailto:clinical@law.harvard.edu) to access the ethics training.
- b. Seek out any ethics training available to you from the organization.
- c. Check in with your supervisor about your ethical obligations with a particular focus on the unique aspects of confidentiality in a remote environment.
- d. Some issues to pay particular attention to if you live in a shared space include but are not limited to the following:
  - i. Finding a private area in your shared space to take calls or use headphones;
  - ii. If possible, setting up a separate work area;
  - iii. Maintaining a “clean desk” policy so that you are not leaving work exposed;
  - iv. Speaking outside of the range of a listening device (e.g., Alexa);

- v. Using password protected file sharing, especially if you are working on a shared computer.
- e. In addition to the issues raised by shared work spaces, everyone will need to understand how to do the following:
  - i. Properly save and transfer electronic files while protecting confidentiality;
  - ii. Making sure not to save client or organization data on your desktop/laptop hard drive.
  - iii. Understanding your obligations concerning how to safeguard and manage high risk confidential information.
  - iv. Being sure to use a computer with anti-malware software to prevent the loss or corruption of data.
  - v. Avoiding use of public internet or free wi-fi when performing client or organization activities that involve access to or transmission of confidential or sensitive data, unless you are connecting over VPN.
  - vi. Using strong passwords to protect your data and devices.
  - vii. Conducting conversations (including video-conferencing) with and about clients in a way that maintains client confidentiality.
- f. Review some of the relevant articles related to technology and legal ethics.
  - i. See Stacey A.L.Best, Assistant Bar Counsel, [Lawyers in Crisis: Ethical Guidance for Remote Work and Dealing with COVID 19](#)
  - ii. Heather LaVigne, Assistant Bar Counsel, [From Technophobe to Technolawyer: A Lawyer's Duties Related to Technology Competence and Prevention of Inadvertent Disclosure.](#)

#### **4. Review legal projects including big picture/context, and specific assignments**

#### **5. Find out about the process of assigning and receiving your work**

- a. Who will be assigning work?
- b. How will you physically or electronically receive the assignment?
- c. Find out how you should ask your questions (e.g. daily emails with all of their questions in one document, text, etc.).

#### **6. Inquire about the plan for saving documents, etc.:**

- a. Learn how your supervisor wants you to save and share your work.
- b. Are there certain naming formats?
- c. Should you email or upload your work product?

#### **7. Substantive Training:** Inquire about:

- a. Whether there are any internal training sessions you can access.
- b. Any staff with whom you can set up a training over video.
- c. Whether there are any online trainings by the local/state bar association, or outside organizations, that might be free or low-cost.

- d. Other ways to familiarize yourself with contemporary cases/news in the substantive area.

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

**Supervision:** Supervision will largely be driven by your supervisor. However, it is your right to receive supervision, and due to busy schedules, it may take some work to ensure it happens on a regular basis.

1. **Set up regular check-in meetings:** Ideally, these meetings will be held at least one time per week, by video, at a set day/time. It is very important to have the time set aside, rather than having to schedule meetings on an ad hoc basis. Meetings can always be short--even 5 min--but it's easier to have a meeting on the calendar than to initiate a new one each time it's needed. If your supervisor is open to it, more frequent meetings might be better; for example, it could be helpful to have a short meeting on a Tuesday or Wednesday to ask questions about assignments or share ideas, and then a Friday meeting to recap the week and plan for the next. (Setting these meetings up right at the beginning of the term is likely to be the most effective way to build it into the new routine you have with your supervisor.)
2. **Set an agenda for your meetings:** Your supervisor may do this, or you could offer. For each meeting, think about including as appropriate:
  - a. A general check in about how things are going generally, both personally and professionally, for you and the supervisor
  - b. Discussion around assignments and projects
    - i. Specific assignments
    - ii. Due Dates
    - iii. How your workload feels in general: are you too busy or not busy enough? What types of assignments are you enjoying the most? The least?
    - iv. New assignments
    - v. Any questions you have about your work.
  - c. Discussion around the experience generally
    - i. How is communication with each other and other supervisors going?
    - ii. Progress towards your goals.
    - iii. Feedback on specific tasks or topics.
3. **Assignments:**
  - a. Ideally, assignments should be varied in terms of length of time to complete, sources required, and skills you are utilizing/developing. Of course, working remotely will mean a lot of research and writing-based assignments; but research and writing can mean more than just completing memo after memo. Think about

all aspects of your organization's work and think about different projects you could complete. If you are sitting in on staff meetings or case rounds, listen for tasks that you could take on. Speak up and ask for them! Supervisors are busy and aren't always thinking about the ideal projects for students; if you hear of a way that you can be helpful and/or a task that you would enjoy doing, your supervisor will likely appreciate your initiative. Finally, having longer-term, less urgent assignments to work on while you are waiting for feedback on another project or when you are between assignments, will keep you engaged and make good use of your fieldwork hours. If your supervisor doesn't propose one or two of these assignments, it is a good idea to ask for them.

- b. Consider creating a document that you can share with your teammates and supervisor about the status of your projects. Having a shared Google Doc, for instance, will allow everyone to be aware of your workload and how long certain tasks are taking to complete. Here is a template you can download:  
<https://cap.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Remote-Work-Tracking-Template.xlsx>
4. **Regular check-in emails or texts:** Beyond the regular check-in meetings, offer to send your supervisor regular communications about the status of assignments, including any outstanding questions; you may wish to ask how often the supervisor prefers to receive this communication; e.g., every day? at the end of the week? If you need feedback or a question answered, plan ahead enough to give you time to consider when you will need the answers in order to move efficiently along throughout the semester. There may be times when you wish to add a "red flag" or "urgent" to the subject of the email to get a prompt response.
5. **Ask if you can participate in calls/meetings as an observer or even, active participant.** Your supervisor might be too busy to always think about including you, so you can self-advocate by making opportunities for yourself. Think about the format in which you make the request; e.g., the supervisor might prefer to talk about these topics in person, but if the answer might be no, it might be more comfortable for the request to come over email.

**Feedback:** Like any in-person experience, feedback is critical to having a meaningful learning experience. And, at the same time, it's often difficult to ask for and difficult to give. Get comfortable with asking for and receiving feedback, and making these requests a consistent part of your interactions with your supervisors.

1. Talk to your supervisor about how and when you can expect feedback, and from whom. Will it always come from the supervisor or possibly from other assigning attorneys? Will you get it regularly, as part of the weekly meetings, or happen on an assignment by assignment basis?



2. Ask for feedback if you are not getting it. The [Student Handbook](#) provides information about getting feedback, but keep in mind that even though everyone is busy, it's just as important to get feedback during this clinical experience. Don't hesitate to ask for specific feedback in the moment, or to schedule a time to talk. You may have to be more intentional about getting feedback, or to get it in different formats, but it's still a critical part of your learning.

**Community building:** Look for opportunities to connect with your co-workers and co-interns that forges both personal and professional relationships. Here are some suggestions:

1. Organize a coffee break or a happy hour or a lunch meeting where people have a space to share personal stories or can share a snack/meal together. The primary goal would be to have a non-work space to get to know people.
2. Plan a trivia or Pictionary gathering, or one of many online games that are now available.
3. Consider asking if there is a group or collaborative project you could work on, if that is your style, to get to know other staff or interns. .
4. See if you can schedule meetings with individual staff--beyond just your supervisor. Invite them to answer some questions about their career path or something about their substantive work. These are incredibly important opportunities to broaden your professional network, find a mentor, or just generally connect to the people and work of your organization.
5. Offer to do a presentation on a topic or skill you have expertise in. This could be a research project you are working on, or something totally unrelated to work. If it's not work-related, you could set this up for after work time and make it very informal, or invite other people to join in sharing the same skill (e.g., playing instruments, or doing a cooking lesson.)
6. Start a book group. This could be work-related or not. Maybe 1-2 times over the course of the summer/semester everyone could read the same book and have a discussion over lunch or after work.
7. Keep your video on whenever possible. If you are participating in zoom meetings, be sure that you turn on your camera so that the presenter(s) and other participants can see you engaging in the presentation.

## **ADDENDUM A:**

### **Remote Internship Checklist**

#### **Onboarding Tips**

- Set up a call/videoconference meeting with your supervisor to get to know one another and to cover the basics.
- Establish a set work schedule with your supervisor, including set “office hours” when each will plan to be available during a regular week.
- Obtain remote access to email and necessary systems and documents.
- Obtain resources and information to read ahead of time.
- Determine a supervision and assignment structure.

#### **Orientation Tips**

- Work with your supervisor to schedule a remote orientation.
- Learn the support structure of your program (supervisor, coordinator, mentor, technical support, etc.) .
- Find out about opportunities to get to know your office and coworkers.
- Do the HLS Ethics Tutorial and seek out ethics training from your placement including any review of confidentiality and security concerns involved in working from home.
- Request some early assignments, including observations, trainings, and substantive written work.

#### **Ongoing Tips**

- Participate in regularly-scheduled, weekly one-on-one video conference meetings with your supervisor.
- Ask for a variety of substantive remote work assignments that fit with your personal and professional goals.
- Ensure you have enough remote work to complete your hours, including both short-term and long-term projects.
- Ask for substantive feedback, written and orally.
- Near the conclusion, request an opportunity for student and supervisor evaluation.
- Do what you can to help foster community-building and informal connections..

## **ADDENDUM B:**

### **Internship Assignment Clarification Checklist**

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

- How does this assignment fit into the overall case? How will the final product be used?
- Where can I access the case file/documents?
- How long should I 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 that I am working on?
- What format should I use for the final product?
- Are there examples of this type of work product your supervisor can provide?
- What other materials (such as a research log or copies of cases) should I include in the final product?
- Where do you suggest I start the research? Is there a good treatise or hornbook you would recommend?
- At what stage or date should you meet to discuss progress on this project?
- Whom should I ask for assistance if your supervisor is not available?
- Sum up (verbally or in writing) what you hear the supervisor asking you to do, to make sure you are both communicating well.