Remote and Micro/Project-Based Internships For Students

What's a Remote Internship?
A remote internship is a professional learning experience, sustained long term over multiple weeks and conducted primarily or wholly online.

What's a Remote Micro or Project-Based Internship?
A remote micro or project-based internship is a remote internship for a shorter period of time, usually 10-40 hours total, in which an intern begins and completes a specific project. These opportunities are focused on completing the project at hand and less focused on an intern's experience within the ecosystem of the greater company.

What Should I Look For In A Remote Internship?
A remote internship's criteria should be no different than an on-site internship in the respect that you should be completing meaningful work, have consistent communication and feedback from a supervisor and have opportunities for professional development. That being said, a remote internship is inherently different than an in-person internship because there are less opportunities for informal conversations, networking and learning.

When looking at a job description, see if you can notice:

- Does the internship have a set hourly schedule?
- What are the methods of communication, feedback and evaluation of work?
- Does the internship have built-in opportunities for engaging with others from the organization?
- Does the internship specify discrete projects you will be working on?
- Does it appear that you will be working on multiple projects simultaneously or one at a time?
- Does the internship specify certain technology needed for the position and/or knowledge of certain platforms?
- Does the work described appear to be aligned with your learning and professional goals?

Therefore, it is important to ask the following to a potential employer:

- What kind of training and onboarding is built into this internship?
- What platforms do your organization use to communicate with one another, keep track of projects and store data?
- How do remote interns account for and log their time?
- Is there an open chat system to answer questions that may arise?
- What kind of check-in and feedback structure is established for remote interns?
- Will there be opportunities to interact with other interns and employees at the organization outside of job duties?
- What kind of technology will be required to complete work?

What Should I Look For In A Remote, Micro/Project-Based Internship?

Again, you should be completing meaningful work, have consistent communication and feedback from a supervisor and have opportunities to develop your professional skill set. Often, the application process for these kinds of opportunities are brief, asking for a resume and short responses to questions. They do not typically include a cover letter or interview.

When looking at a job description, see if you can notice:

- Are you qualified to complete this project independently?
- What is the scope of the project?
- What are the methods of communication, feedback and evaluation of work?
- Does the project specify certain technology needed and/or knowledge of certain platforms?
● Does the work described appear to be aligned with your learning and professional goals?

General Best Practices for Working Remotely:

● Become familiar in advance with the tools common in remote work settings. You might notice you already use many of these: Zoom, Google Hangouts / Chat, Slack, Microsoft Teams, Trello and Asana.
● Create a set schedule with your supervisor as to when you are working, when you are taking breaks and when you are unplugging.
● Establish separate locations in your house in which you work and do not work. Do not work in bed!
● Request at least daily check-in’s with a supervisor, even if it is just through chat.
● Feel empowered to ask questions for clarification and communicate on varied platforms (email, chat, project management sites and video chat).
● Be flexible when possible. Stay focused and positive. For many internships this summer, remote working may be new not only for you but for the organization you will be working for. This means that everyone will be learning, trying new routines and methods of communication and re-establishing norms.
● Stay in contact with friends and others outside of your internship to maintain social connections even though you are working alone.
● Use the summer as an opportunity to continue a dialogue with your professors about your career and academic goals. Or, consider utilizing the Amherst alumni network to find new professional mentors. Make sure you find someone who is willing and able to help you make your internship impactful.

How to Pitch Converting Your Internship into a Remote Internship This Summer:

It is not your responsibility to create the infrastructure for a remote version of your internship. You are encouraged, however, to inquire about what remote alternatives may be available in order for you to do your internship this summer. Keep in mind that only some aspects of your originally agreed upon internship may be possible this summer if you or your employer decide to pursue making your internship remote. Your internship may need to be shortened in duration or by the number of work hours or the scope of work may be smaller. If this is the case, you can ask your employer if there are other areas in which you could work within the organization to maintain a full-time status. When having these conversations, asking clarifying questions and having details confirmed in writing is very important. Refer to the ‘What Should I Look For In a Remote Internship’ section above for questions to ask.

The Loeb Center strongly encourages you to sign an amended contract containing your new position description with your internship supervisor.

● If you are still searching for an internship or have already applied to internships and are waiting to hear back, you are welcome to include your willingness to work remotely in your cover letter and or write the hiring committee with a brief note to express your continued interest.
● If you already have an internship offer, check in with your internship supervisor or HR contact as soon as possible.

Sample Email:

Dear ______ (insert name of person such as who sent you the internship offer),

I hope you are doing well and that you and your colleagues are safe. I know these are unprecedented times and everyone is adjusting as needed. As you may have heard, similar to most US colleges, Amherst College has moved to remote learning as of March 23rd. I have returned home to finish out my semester.
Although I'm disappointed to not be on campus, I am excited to be joining [insert name of organization] as an intern on [insert start date]. If you need to contact me for any reason, I will be checking email and my mobile phone regularly. Please note that I am open to the possibility of interning remotely as well. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best,

[Your name here]