

Mentor Toolkit: Best Practices for Effective Internship Mentorship

1. Set the Cultural Context Explicitly

- Explain workplace norms early (communication, dress, hierarchy, confidentiality).
- Share “how things work here” openly—nothing is too obvious to say.
- Frame the workplace as a new culture with learnable rules.

2. Co-Create Clear Expectations

- Use **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Define deliverables *and* timelines.
- Revisit expectations regularly.

3. Balance Structure with Discovery

- Start with manageable, structured tasks.
- Allow space for projects to evolve as intern interests emerge.
- Ask early: *What kind of supervision helps you do your best work?*

4. Translate Humanities Skills Continuously

- Name skills explicitly (analysis, synthesis, empathy, research, collaboration).
- Draw analogies between classroom experiences and workplace tasks.
- Practice resume and interview translation together.

5. Normalize Discomfort and Growth

- Frame confusion, mistakes, and slow progress as part of learning.
- Share your own learning curves.
- Praise effort, persistence, and problem-solving—not just outcomes.

6. Prioritize Relationship-Building

- Treat interns as emerging professionals and colleagues.
- Schedule one-on-one time for reflection.
- Show genuine interest in their goals and constraints.

7. Emphasize Process Over Perfection

- Celebrate learning processes, not just finished products.
- Help interns identify repeatable workflows.
- Encourage reflection on what worked—and what didn't.

8. Foster Triadic Communication

- Connect early with faculty mentors.
- Hold joint check-ins when possible (faculty, site mentor, intern).
- Align academic and workplace expectations.

9. Use Interns as Reflective Partners

- Invite feedback on organizational communication and mission clarity.
- Ask how new audiences might perceive your work.
- Value interns' fresh perspectives.

10. End with Forward Translation

- Help interns articulate what they learned and how it applies elsewhere.
- Connect skills to future coursework and career paths.
- Celebrate growth, not just completion.