



HERDWORK HUMANITIES

JANUARY 2026 MENTORSHIP WORKSHOP

Making the Most of Mentorship

A Short Guide for HerdWork Humanities Interns

Practical ways to communicate, learn, respond to feedback, and take increasing ownership of your internship experience.

January 13, 2026

HerdWork Humanities | Marshall University College of Liberal Arts



Mentorship Is a Partnership

Mentorship is one of the most important parts of your internship. A mentor does more than assign tasks. Mentors help you understand the organization, develop professional skills, work through challenges, recognize your growth, and connect your humanities education to the workplace.

Strong mentorship depends on active participation from both the mentor and the intern. You are not expected to arrive knowing how to do everything. You are expected to communicate, ask questions, practice, accept feedback, and take increasing responsibility for your work.

REMEMBER

You do not need to present yourself as completely independent. Being honest about the support you need helps your mentor guide you effectively.

Your Mentoring Team

- **Your site mentor** helps you understand the organization's mission, workplace culture, expectations, projects, and professional practices.
- **Your faculty mentor** helps you reflect on the experience, connect academic learning to your internship, recognize transferable skills, and think through challenges.

These mentors have different roles, but both are there to support your development. Keep them informed about your progress and communicate concerns before they become larger problems.

1. Tell Your Mentor What Helps You Learn

Interns do not all need the same kind of supervision. Some people work best with detailed instructions and frequent check-ins. Others prefer broader goals and more independence.

Early in the internship, discuss how much structure helps you, how often you would like to check in, whether written or verbal instructions work best, what kind of feedback is useful, and which skills or professional interests you hope to explore.

CONVERSATION STARTER

"What kind of supervision helps me do my best work?"

2. Learn the Workplace's Customs

Every workplace has written expectations and unwritten customs. Ask about schedules, attendance, dress, forms of address, meeting etiquette, communication channels, use of phones and social media, and information that must remain confidential.

When you are uncertain, ask rather than guess. You cannot be expected to follow a workplace custom that has never been explained, but you are responsible for seeking clarification when something is unclear.

3. Take Ownership of Your Responsibilities

Your work may affect colleagues, community partners, clients, or members of the public. Arrive and complete work as agreed, keep an accurate record of your hours, monitor deadlines, ask for



clarification, acknowledge mistakes honestly, and notify your mentor early when circumstances affect your work.

When you bring a problem to your mentor, explain what happened, what you have already tried, and what possible next step you are considering. Professional communication is part of the solution.

4. Expect Practice, Revision, and False Starts

You are an intern because you are learning. You will not immediately know how to complete every task, speak confidently in every setting, or respond perfectly to every situation.

An outreach attempt that receives no response can still teach you how to communicate. A project that requires several revisions can help you develop a process you will use again. Do not interpret every correction or unsuccessful attempt as failure.

GROWTH MINDSET

"It's okay to not be good at something yet." - Michael Tierney, site mentor

5. Learn by Watching, Asking, and Practicing

Pay attention to how experienced colleagues communicate, organize work, handle conflict, make decisions, conduct meetings, and adjust their approach for different people or circumstances.

Ask whether you may shadow your mentor during work that is too advanced, sensitive, or complicated for you to lead. Observation can help you understand the larger organization and prepare for future responsibility.

6. Recognize and Name Your Humanities Skills

Research, close reading, writing, interpretation, language study, group projects, creative work, and classroom discussion can prepare you for workplace responsibilities. During your internship, look for evidence of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, cultural awareness, perspective taking, self-awareness, research, problem solving, and adaptability.

Do not stop at saying, "I used communication." Identify what you actually did, how you adapted to the audience or situation, and what result followed.

EXAMPLE

Instead of "I used communication," try: "I interviewed community members, adjusted my questions for different audiences, and summarized the information for my supervisor."

7. Document Both the Product and the Process

With site permission, save appropriate evidence of your work, such as writing samples, research, event materials, designs, presentations, project plans, photographs, or data summaries.



Also record the process: the problem you addressed, decisions you made, feedback you received, revisions you completed, obstacles you encountered, skills you developed, and the way your work helped the organization.

Questions to Use During Mentor Check-Ins

1. Am I meeting your expectations for communication, attendance, and quality of work?
2. What am I doing well, and what should I strengthen next?
3. Is there a task, meeting, or process I could observe or help with?
4. Which professional or humanities skills do you see me using?
5. Is there a work product I should save for my Experience Portfolio or Showcase?
6. What responsibility am I ready to take on next?

When You Encounter a Challenge

Do not disappear, delay communication, or assume that asking for help makes you look unprepared. Contact the appropriate mentor, explain the situation honestly, and participate in developing a solution.

A USEFUL SCRIPT

"I want to update you about a challenge I am having with _____. So far, I have tried _____. I think one possible next step is _____. Could we talk about how you would like me to proceed?"

Persistence does not mean tolerating harassment, abuse, discrimination, unsafe conditions, or inappropriate treatment. Bring serious concerns to your faculty mentor and the HerdWork Humanities program promptly.

Final Reminder

Strong interns are not people who never need help. They are people who communicate, accept feedback, learn from experience, and take increasing responsibility for their work.

WORKSHOP INSIGHT

"Life is as much the process as the product." - Dr. Maria Gindhart, faculty mentor

Your internship is an opportunity not only to complete work, but also to discover how you learn, how you contribute, what kind of professional you want to become, and how your humanities education can make a difference.

Source and use note. This guide synthesizes practical insights from the January 13, 2026 HerdWork Humanities Mentorship Workshop. Quotations are lightly edited for clarity.