

# **An Exploratory Guide for Hybrid Internships in Small Scale Arts Organisations**

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# ARTQUEST

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## Introduction

Artquest's [AWP Internships programme](#) aims to 'level the playing field' for arts graduates who cannot afford to work for free by creating quality internship opportunities paid at above the London Living Wage. The programme offers high-quality internships to recent University of the Arts London (UAL) graduates who are in the first generation in their family to attend a Higher Education institution at some of London's most respected small-scale arts organisations. [Artquest](#) is a programme of UAL supported through national portfolio funding from Arts Council England.

The COVID-19 / coronavirus pandemic has prevented this programme running safely in 2020, with hosts who would be able to facilitate an online or hybrid internship anticipating January 2021 as the earliest date they could begin. Lockdown restrictions could continue in some form for months or possibly years, including staggered returns to work or a series of ongoing shorter firebreak / circuit breaker lockdowns to limit transmission of the virus. Worker safety could require much larger structural changes to architecture and public transport which will seriously limit access to careers in the creative industries, particularly for new graduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those in clinically vulnerable groups.

The [Resolution Foundation predicts](#) that an additional 640,000 18-24- year-olds could find themselves unemployed in 2020, with a 13% lower employment rate persisting even after three years. Although challenging to deliver, internships are even more urgently required to ensure that graduates get early career support in these unprecedented circumstances. It is also essential to maintain schemes that prioritise graduates from under-represented communities, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Alongside graduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds, these communities include Black, Asian and other minority ethnicities, LGBTQ+ graduates and those with disabilities including neurodiversity.

### **AWP Internships: so far**

AWP Internships aims to be the highest possible quality internship in the visual arts. Begun in 2013 its main features and the research underpinning its structure are contained in the 2012 report [Intern Culture](#). The programme is open only to new UAL graduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In its 'live' format AWP Internships offered:

- A paid role for 48 days over 6 months (equivalent to 2 days per week, with hours and days negotiable to the host organisation) at some of London's most respected small-scale arts organisations
- Supported interviews, as candidates are unlikely to have any professional experience in the arts
- Pay above the London Living Wage, with rates rising annually
- Induction and orientation from their host organisation, with clear line management and a job description
- Up to five days of paid annual leave
- A review of progress halfway through their internship
- Regular meetings, including an exit interview and evaluation
- A reference for future job and internship opportunities.

Interns also get regular support and contact with a mentor, an alumnus of the scheme. Alongside the named line manager for the intern, who is responsible for day-to-day management of tasks and feedback, the mentor answers questions relating to the wider arts sector and provides additional

general wellbeing support. They also act as a conduit to Artquest to allow the intern to discuss issues or concerns that they do not feel able to raise with their line manager.

An evaluation of the programme's first five years found that:

- Only 37% of internships in the creative industries are paid
- One third more women than men take unpaid internships
- Paid internships specifically for the visual arts are vanishingly rare - only five paid visual arts schemes were found, with one no longer in operation
- 92% of arts workers in 2014 were from more advantaged backgrounds
- 60% of AWP interns received a means-tested bursary; 90% identify as female; 25% identify as non-white
- 95% found paid employment within 6 months (81% for UAL), 60% part-time (26% UAL) and 20% full-time (55% UAL)
- 75% continue to work in the arts and creative sectors – comparable for the Weston Jerwood scheme (78%), the largest such creative internship scheme in the UK working cross artform

**AWP supports interns**, in their words, by:

- Providing the employment experience necessary to access further entry-level jobs
- Giving insight into different career options within the arts, wider than just their role
- Showing how arts organisations actually work, how decisions are made and how budgets are negotiated
- Getting further paid work - often with the host organisation

**AWP supports hosts organisations**, in their words, by:

- Helping them hire more diverse staff
- Providing a larger capacity for tiny arts organisations (all hosts, except the self-funded Tate internship, have fewer than 8 staff; 91% of arts orgs have fewer than 4 staff); 92% of hosts would not be able to offer internships without extra funding

## **Research aims**

Considering the context outlined above, this research aims to propose guidance for running online and hybrid internships for new UAL graduates from 2021 onwards. We intend to pilot new models for internships based on the recommendations in this research, and an evaluation of the pilot will feed back into its development. Although the guide is primarily aimed at small-scale arts organisations across different areas of the visual arts, we hope it will be helpful for others interested in developing inclusive and equitable digital internships.

By *hybrid internships*, we mean internships that are delivered partly or fully remotely through digital technologies. Such internships would contain an element of physical attendance in the arts organisation where pandemic restrictions and the wider safety context of buildings and public transport allowed. Interns or staff may additionally encounter restrictions around shielding, either for themselves or vulnerable close contacts, which could also make physical attendance difficult or impossible. The pilot seeks to understand and accommodate these complex issues while supporting graduates into work and arts organisations at this unprecedented time.

## **Research participants**

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with partner organisations:

1. [Iniva](#) (Institute of International Visual Arts), a radical visual arts organisation that develops artistic programmes and collaborates with artists, curators, researchers and cultural producers to challenge conventional notions of diversity and difference;
2. [Gasworks](#), a non-profit contemporary visual art organisation that provides studios, commissions emerging artists to present their first major exhibitions in the UK and develops an international residency programme;
3. [Forma](#), a commissioning agency that supports the research, development and production of artistic projects that span multiple disciplines, challenge existing practices and demand new levels of ambition;
4. and [Flat Time House](#), the former home of artist John Lathan, which is now a gallery with a programme of exhibitions and events and a centre for alternative learning, which includes the John Latham archive, and an artist's residency space.

Two semi-structured interviews were held with Joshua Byrne and Kyle Douglas, both of whom have undertaken digital internships, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Investment Management company [Sanlam Wealthsmiths](#), respectively. A summary of these interviews is below, and a full version can be found in Appendix 1.

Additional informal discussions were conducted with UAL staff and individuals from other sectors who are involved in delivering or developing digital internships:

- Jayne Knowles, Associate Dean, Student Journey CCW - Academic Development and Student Communities, UAL
- Jonathan Carson, Associate Dean of Student Experience & Enhancement, CSM, UAL
- Carys Nelkon, Head of Programmes and Korantema Anyimadu, Community Manager, [Arts Emergency](#)
- Lora Ghany, Employability & Progression Manager, Creative Shift, UAL
- Beverley Casling, Virtual Internships Manager, [Open University](#)
- Amelia Timewell, Head of Communications & Engagement (Multilateral Policy & Human Rights), Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Notes from conversations with Jayne, Amelia and Jonathan are included in Appendix 2. Conversations with Beverley, Lora, Carys and Korantema are paraphrased in the following section on existing and pilot digital internships.

## Existing and pilot online / hybrid internships, placements or work experience

During the course of this research very few online or hybrid internships were discovered – particularly in the arts. We therefore expanded our research to look at work experience and work placement programmes which, although they differ significantly from internships in both job responsibility and length, still hold valuable lessons on induction, building online relationships, access and more.

### Arts Emergency Online Work Experience

Arts Emergency is an award-winning charity providing expert mentors, guidance and opportunities to support marginalised young people into Higher Education and creative careers. Their online work experience programme enables organisations to support a young person or group of young people on a work experience placement for five working days. These are facilitated using Google Classroom, which enables hosts to post tasks, set deadlines and create video meetings. The hosts are given training in Google Classroom by Arts Emergency. They are expected to attend briefings with Arts Emergency on the first and last days of the placement, do a phone or video check in call with the young people every day of the placement, and be on all phone/video calls with other members of their organisation and the young person.

The team noted that the main challenge was around internet access and access to laptops. In some cases, host organisations loaned these out to interns. Access needs were checked with interns at the beginning of the process. Online internships have opened up more opportunities for interns across the country to access the programme and for more host organisations to take part. They have also allowed freelancers to offer internships. In one case, an applicant had expressed interest in writing a fantasy novel, so Arts Emergency partnered them with a fantasy novelist, and they spent a very productive and positive week together. Some organisations took on two placements at once to create an additional peer-to-peer support mechanism.

For more information visit the [Arts Emergency website](#), read the [Arts Emergency Online Work Experience Guide](#) or watch a [video created by Creative Emergency online work experience placement, Hope](#), who spent a week with Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts.

### **Creative Access**

Creative Access is a social enterprise that works with under-represented candidates and organisations across the creative industries. Their mission is to “help under-represented communities, not just enter the creative industries, but to thrive when they get in – because only then will the industry truly reflect and engage broader society.” Creative Access are currently running ‘virtual internships’, and have created several helpful [resources](#) around the topic including:

- [Top tips for undertaking a virtual internship](#)
- [Creating an effective virtual mentoring partnership](#)
- [How to interview remotely](#)

### **Creative Shift**

Creative Shift is part of UAL’s Careers & Employability’s department, dedicated to supporting students who meet criteria in line with [UAL’s Access & Participation Plan](#). They run extra-curricular projects and workshops that help students gain skills and experience including collaborating with other students from across UAL, getting paid work experience, and connecting with creative people and brands. At the beginning of lockdown, the team surveyed 20 programme participants, who unanimously wanted to continue with the programme remotely, as long as their home circumstances were considered. The challenge was how to translate highly collaborative in-person events and activities into an online space. Some approaches included:

- Modifying the participants’ brief from creating an in-person event to creating an interactive digital experience
- Splitting two-hour in person events into repeated one-hour online sessions
- Splitting a group of 20 into two groups of 10

- Creating a ‘Work from Home Residency’, which offered students a £500 bursary to support the continuation of their creative practice at home. This was based on Artquest’s [WFH Residency](#) and Artquest staff helped in its development.
- Putting on a lunchtime Masterclass series
- Asking industry partners if sessions could be recorded and shared to students unable to attend at a given time
- Providing career support to tackle motivation and worries, including informal virtual chats where students could talk through anything in relation to their creative careers and ideas, especially if COVID-19 had presented additional challenges. Sessions were 30 minutes long and discussion topics included:
  - Time management strategies / how to adjust or start new routines
  - How to get ‘unstuck’ in creative projects
  - How to amend projects & work with new limitations and challenges
  - How to identify and sell skills & capabilities to employers
  - Job hunting & wellbeing strategies and resources

Creative Shift also offered check-ins to provide students with a safe space to talk about the challenges they were facing and provide advice from an industry partner (Abraham Asefaw, Co-founder of the [Pop Up Agency](#)). Check-ins happened once a week on Wednesday lunchtimes and students could drop in at any time.

Many participants said it was beneficial to not have to travel across London for sessions. There has been a mixed response to working online. Some students felt comfortable, while others have found it hard to engage. Some are reluctant to have their cameras on, which makes sense- checking their emotional states difficult for facilitators. A camera-on policy is undesirable, so it would be helpful for both students and facilitators to have open discussions about the culture of cameras and online meetings more generally. Being seen on screen can be very invasive and students can be self-conscious about their environment. Webcams are a window onto people’s personal lives that we are all grappling with.

To foster community, the Creative Shift team have tried to ‘meet students where they are’, tap into how they are already networking and use these channels to communicate. An example was using Instagram for a student-led network, which was successful and seen as very accessible by students, who could tune into Instagram Lives easily wherever they were. The team approached questions of accessibility through discussion with individuals and groups and have been tackling challenges on a case by case basis. They included survey questions about accessibility and found that the majority of respondents had the necessary equipment and internet bandwidth. In some cases, students needed to negotiate use of a family laptop.

For more information, visit the [Creative Shift website](#).

## **Open University**

The Open University (OU) have been piloting virtual internships for the past year. 75% of OU students study around work or other responsibilities, and for many of them, traditional internships don’t work. The pilot internships have been very successful from both students and employers’ perspectives:

*“Virtual internships are the cutting edge of the new ideas of a flipped office. They highlight the need for getting students ready for a changing workplace. They should be as commonplace as other internships.” - Amy King, GlamSci (employer)*

The OU encourages employers to ensure virtual interns do not feel left out or isolated. They offer interns a pre-internship phone call to identify their aspirations and expectations so these can be communicated with the employer. An end of the internship discussion enables a reflection on what was identified at the beginning of the internship.

One employer in the OU's scheme had 3 interns concurrently. They allocated both individual and group tasks so the interns could select the bits of work they wanted to explore the most. This allowed for collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst the interns as well.

For more information visit the [OU Virtual Internships webpage](#) or read [tips from an OU student who did a virtual internship](#).

## Host Interview Findings

The following section outlines themes that emerged through interviews with previous AWP Internship hosts: Iniva, Gasworks and Forma. Flat Time House was also interviewed who, although not having previously participated in AWP Internships, had been selected for the 2020 programme prior to its cancellation due to COVID-19 / coronavirus.

### Impact of the pandemic

The impact of the pandemic on small scale arts organisations was felt most in terms of the closure of spaces, which led to losing in-person audiences and sales. The financial impact was felt differently, depending on the pre-lockdown financial state of the organisation. Those that were more established found the financial impact more manageable. Several of the organisations furloughed significant numbers of staff, and none reported redundancies. All organisations delayed projects, exhibitions, or studio lets as a result of the pandemic.

### Challenges around working digitally

All the organisations used digital platforms for some of their working, though to different degrees, and all spoke about their current processes of navigating the digital world. It was noted that transitions during lockdown were easier for those staff who already worked at home before the lockdown. Several challenges of working digitally were described, including having to learn a lot of digital skills in a short time period, particularly around running digital events, such as reading groups or seminars, which can be difficult to manage due to a lack of non-verbal communication. For the smaller organisations, a lack of capacity or infrastructure for developing digital ways of working was also difficult. Another challenge was the limitations of digital technologies and how tiring or alienating they can feel:

*"It's bizarre how many assumptions there are, I mean the use of Zoom relentlessly is just so inaccessible and it's very tiring to use all the time" - Laura, Gasworks*

*"There's a harshness to digital platforms whether it's email or Zoom or phone calls where all nuance and subtleties are erased, so you can't necessarily pick up on the subtle signs or language of someone, and because we all hate it, we tend to be a bit more abrupt or direct on these platforms... I'm just thinking of people coming out of University, and maybe having less confidence in the workforce. It's a harsher environment for an intern" - Chris, Forma*

*"On the visual arts side of it, sometimes when you're talking about something visual, you'll literally just draw it and give it to someone. There's been a few times when I've been working with an artist remotely and I'm doodling on a Post-it, so there's that actual exchange of physical documents that can be helpful. I don't think you can't exist without it, but it's something to be aware of in how things are communicated and conceived" - Rachel, Forma*

For some, basic digital working is already at the core of their organisation, and this was seen as lending itself to digital internships:

*"We Google Doc the house down, so in that sense an intern could integrate into our way of working and we can use that structure in a way that lends itself very well to a digital internship" - Rachel, Forma.*

Several organisations noted that having been forced to work digitally has encouraged them to re-think the possibilities of both digital working and digital art practices. Though these are distinct forms, they are both forming significant parts of arts organisations' growth during and post Covid-19:

*"We're trying to think about what is an exhibition without the space and what is an event without the space...what is someone experiencing when they come to Flat Time House and how can we build a platform that allows for an equivalent to that?" - Gareth, Flat Time House*

Several broader challenges were identified, including team and staff motivation and the changing habits of staff after four months working from home. Hosts were concerned about the logistics of socially distancing visitors while keeping front of house staff safe and generally managing hygiene and health and safety in physical spaces.

### **Benefits of working digitally**

There were some notable benefits to working digitally, including having the space and necessity to approach working on digital platforms and with digital artworks in more progressive and novel ways:

*"It's been an opportunity to up our game digitally" - Chris, Forma*

The lockdown was seen as prompting some to revise digital strategies and learn new methods such as live streaming, as well as to be more present digitally.

All organisations noted that they have been able to reach bigger and more international audiences as a result of delivering programmes digitally, with one organisation having seen attendance numbers double for digital events. Several organisations noted how helpful digital programming is in terms of better accessibility for audiences who may otherwise struggle to attend events due to access requirements, caring responsibilities, or financial or travel constraints. It is easier and more affordable to engage international speakers digitally as well:

*"I hope there is a reckoning with [the art world] because it was functioning a lot in the model of residencies, events, biennials, conference that actually are accessible for a very small number of people who don't have responsibilities or barriers, or who have less, and I think the model wasn't sustainable and really excluded a lot of people." - Simina, Iniva*

### **Interest in digital internships**

All organisations were open to hosting digital internships, though some felt it would be more challenging than others both for the host and the intern. All showed a preference for a hybrid model but would be willing to deliver something fully digital if there were no other options given local restrictions around Covid-19 at the time. One organisation noted that they would probably not have applied for the scheme if it had been advertised as for 100% digital internships, because their internships are so oriented around physical archives, and as a small team, they lack capacity to manage digital internships.

Several said they felt there would be more pressure on the intern's Line Manager if the internship was wholly digital, because it would require additional planning and re-thinking current job/project descriptions, as well as providing more formalised support, rather than the support they can offer implicitly by being physically co-present. Much of the openness to digital internships stemmed from general support of AWP Internships itself, which was praised for its inclusiveness and value for interns and hosts:

*"I just think what the Artquest internship does is really worth supporting and I can't think of a scenario where I wouldn't want it...I was genuinely over the moon to hear that there is a proactive assessment underway" - Rachel, Forma*

All organisations expressed concern about ensuring the internship was still a positive and rewarding experience for the intern, with some noting it might be harder to instil confidence without any in-person encounters. It was noted that a digital intern's experience would be less negatively impacted if they were working in a fully online context, or on projects that are digital from start to finish. If they are missing out on in-person experiences that some members of the organisation are having, such as meeting artists or informal gathering with colleagues, or are unable to participate in the in-person aspects of projects they have worked on remotely, this may have a more negative impact.

Several organisations saw digital internships as being beneficial for helping them develop digital strategies and learn with the intern about new forms of digital practice. If digital programming or practice were specifically of interest it would need to be written into hosts' project descriptions, so applicants are aware about it.

*"I do think a digital internship could work, both in terms of logistics, but also in terms of the content that would be discussed around that [which] could be really interesting for Gasworks, because that is an area we would be keen to develop and it would be amazing to have somebody that was keen to support that or had interest in that area" - Laura, Gasworks.*

All organisations expressed that digital internships could help them improve accessibility if the intern was able to help to consider digital strategy and programming. It would also make the internships themselves more accessible to interns who may not have been able to attend in person.

### **Tasks online and offline**

There was consensus around the kinds of tasks that could most easily be done digitally, namely any online marketing, social media, communications, programming and community/audience engagement. It was noted that interns who had an interest in these areas might also support the development of digital strategy. One organisation noted that studio visits could be facilitated digitally via a webcam.

The tasks that may not be generally possible depending on lockdown conditions were those requiring access to specific materials and resources or in-person access to spaces. These interviews were carried out during full lockdown however, and it may be possible for interns to attend in-person events if they are live and national restrictions allow an audience or staff on-site. If restrictions change, this would not be possible for anyone (artists, staff, audiences and interns), so the intern would not be losing out on access that others have. As a member of staff, any intern would be covered by health and safety policies or other processes introduced as part of pandemic mitigation.

Some hosts noted that some of the things that would be harder to facilitate digitally are the highest value aspects of an internship, and that losing these would be have a big impact. These might include:

- Being present at the installation of an exhibition
- Celebrating together at a private view
- Having physical access to special materials or archives

For a dedicated hybrid or digital internship, new project descriptions would be required. Some saw this as fundamentally changing the focus on the internship, whereas others saw potential revisions as minimal.

Several organisations noted the value of seeing production projects through to their final realisation, which is often an in-person event or exhibition:

*"If someone is working remotely on programming that is not completely digital, then it raises the question of whether they're actually there for the delivery of programming...I think it's less beneficial as an intern if you're working on projects and you're not witness to their delivery. I think that's a really important part of learning – seeing the final product."* - Mary, Flat Time House

*"It's quite key to production that you're working towards a big crescendo or a big end project, so it feels more representative of the job to have that upward trajectory than to have someone working remotely and not get that"* - Rachel, Forma

### **Personal and informal connections**

*"The value of doing an internship isn't in doing the job that you've been told to do, it's in the encounters that happen around that"* - Gareth, Flat Time House

*"A lunchtime can turn into something quite wonderful where you're sitting with artists at the table and you're building relationships and you get an opportunity to sit next to the director and have a conversation about how he got into the arts, and those are really wonderful conversations to have. I suppose the digital maybe doesn't make room for those informal chit chats"* - Laura, Gasworks

All organisations emphasised the importance of informal moments of personal connection that arise through being physically co-present in a space both in relation to formal task-related conversations and informal conversations and socialising. For formal tasks, proximity was seen as helpful for the learning process:

*"In my experience and when I've been trained myself, it's pretty helpful to have someone that you can check in with and ask small questions throughout the course of the day and when I've had jobs where I've not had that kind of managerial access, where you're left on your own and you have to write a list of things that you have to do to check in with someone, that's fine if you've already got a working relationship with someone but it can be challenging if it's your first job role."* - Mary, Flat Time House

Current strategies to build informal connections include:

- Having a 'just shout across the office' culture, where interns are encouraged to ask questions whenever they need to
- Encouraging the intern to spend time with teams
- Including the intern in all general conversations
- Having informal conversations during social time and lunch or tea breaks
- Being in close physical proximity during formal work time
- Encouraging interns to talk about their own practice
- Encouraging interns to produce a creative output during their internship
- Having conversations about materials/objects/artefacts in the space

*“Because we’re so surrounded by books and materials, technically we’re always surrounded by these conversations” - Simina, Iniva*

Some highlighted the challenges of working digitally without a previous in-person relationship and expressed concern about how to successfully onboard and integrate an intern into the team without this element:

*“There’s definitely a benefit of there being a face to face intro to projects...the physicality of the projects we work on...or the complexity of it, the fact that you’re balancing context with production, with logistics, with a budget, sometimes being physically in a space with someone gives a much more organic way of discussing something that’s very complex, but then saying that, it’s not like I’ve found massive barriers towards discussing projects with other professionals during the quarantine, so I’m maybe making an assumption that there’s a lack of experience that requires that face to face more” - Rachel, Forma*

*“If you’re asking someone to do something it’s fine, but if you’re trying to learn it changes because you’re not having the same kind of interaction. I’m thinking [of] going to lunch together and having informal conversations which aren’t ‘working’, but it is actually learning about the institution and learning the role and how we do things, and learning what we think are the correct ways and the ethical ways of operating as an institution, which we wouldn’t sit down and explain to someone over a 2-hour talk, but over time, through the way we would talk to the intern as an equal and sit in the office with them as an equal, and give appropriate roles, which wouldn’t be intimidating for them but would also be the best learning for the institution...I’d hesitate to say it isn’t possible, I’m just not sure how to do it yet” - Gareth, Flat Time House*

It was noted that extra effort would need to be made to foster these moments in digital internships. In some cases, this has been happening through the lockdown already with current teams:

*“We did a quiz every week, and it was a nice way to keep the team together. We’re quite a close-knit team and we want to keep that going” - Laura, Gasworks.*

Some existing strategies for building informal connections could be replicated in a hybrid or digital internship and could be beneficial for all staff, not just interns:

<b>Existing strategy</b>	<b>Hybrid strategy</b>
Having a ‘just shout across the office’ culture, where interns are encouraged to ask questions whenever they need to	Ensure interns know staff or line managers are available online or by phone during working hours; regular check-in times for informal tea breaks over video chat
Encouraging the intern to spend time with teams	Schedule digital coffees with each staff member
Including the intern in all general conversations	Include the intern in all general online meetings
Having informal conversations during social time and lunch or tea breaks	Schedule social time over lunch and digital tea/coffee breaks
Being in close physical proximity during formal work time	This is difficult to replicate online, but the other strategies here may help create connections as far as possible without physical proximity. In a hybrid model some physical interaction or meeting would be encouraged where safe and responsible.

Encouraging interns to talk about their own practice	Encouraging interns to talk about their own practice during scheduled online sessions. This may be more intimidating in a more formal scheduled setting, so consider using a peer sharing format including all staff.
Encouraging interns to produce a creative output during their internship	Encouraging interns to produce a creative output during their internship, with an emphasis on actions that take place away from a screen
Having conversations about materials/objects/artefacts in the space	Facilitating online conversations about materials/objects/artefacts in the space, or discuss a text or film/podcast. In a hybrid model some materials may be able to be borrowed by the intern (low-value / low risk material not requiring environmental controls or special handling, such as publications) or conversations able to take place in the venue.

**Potential barriers for interns**

None of the organisations interviewed require interns to have specialist software, but some expressed concern about other aspects of digital accessibility, including access to fast internet connections and general digital literacy:

*"As part of our education programme we have a board of advisors that help us navigate how to work with communities, and it's made up of our previous participants, so we have...refugees and asylum seekers from an LGBT group, and a lot of Latin American community members. So we all came together and started discussing how we can distribute the podcast and...make sure we're targeting specific community groups, and a lot of the people on that meeting were like: 'How do you access a podcast?' and again, it's just my privilege that hits me in the face, so it's about always thinking about access and digital" – Laura, Gasworks*

*"In terms of access, it needs to be a conversation that's a lot more present in terms of needs and what we can do to support. Until now we didn't have particular access needs to support, but it's definitely something we need to think about more" - Simina, Iniva*

All partners expressed interest in cross-partner workshops, events and networking for hosts and interns.

## Intern Interview Findings

Full write ups of the intern interviews with Joshua and Kyle can be read in Appendix 1. Below is a summary of main findings.

Both interns noted that the in-person social aspects of internships were missed, and both preferred the face-to-face mode. However, both said they would do a digital internship again. The advantage of not having to travel was noted.

At induction, social elements were seen as a priority. It is also helpful if hosts don't make assumptions at this stage about interns' existing knowledge and check they are providing information at a comfortable pace.

Both interns found lengthy periods online with little social activity challenging, physically and psychologically. For Joshua, the social aspect of an internship is a vital part of maintaining wellbeing and reducing anxiety. A 'camera off' culture can feel uncomfortable for interns and make it harder for Line Managers to read or check in with their wellbeing and emotional state.

Highly task-focused group work with no social elements was seen as unsatisfactory by both interns. For Kyle, it felt unnecessary to get to know people in the context of highly task-focused work – knowing how to break down tasks was all that was required, and this was less rewarding. It seems important to note how this kind of task-focused working could potentially undermine an emphasis on attributes such as empathy and communication.

Both interns felt their hosts could have done more to encourage fun or social activities, such as quizzes, virtual lunches or coffee roulette. They saw these kinds of activities as essential for developing social and collaborative skills.

Managing wellbeing was a challenge for both, with the hardest aspects being the amount of screen time required and not being able to socialise with colleagues. It was noted that a sense of achievement is also important in terms of promoting wellbeing and reducing anxiety.

Joshua found the process of asking questions more difficult in the digital internship, because it has to be done in a more formal way. This can make interns feel self-conscious or that they are not displaying enough initiative, so reassurance that asking questions is OK would be beneficial.

Both interns noted that delivering and listening to online talks is challenging. Training for UAL students and graduates around how to present online as well as how to interview online may be helpful.

### Advice for digital interns

*"I think networking is the biggest thing – following all these people on LinkedIn and if you're very interested in one of their talks, actually seek out that person and email them or something"* - Kyle approached one of the speakers whose talk he enjoyed by email, and she agreed to have a call with him to give him career advice.

*"Set up little coffee intro meetings with everyone – literally everyone. It just makes work so much easier when you're comfortable with everybody and you're comfortable asking them questions and just make them aware you're new and you're going to need help. Do what you can to find your people and don't be afraid to ask if there are socials and things going on"*

### Advice for host organisations

*“Try and be enthusiastic about what you’re talking about and try and involve everyone...It does go a long way to have someone talk to you but with a smile on their face.”*

*“Try to have upfront conversations about wellbeing – if someone has mentioned wellbeing in the past like I had, there probably should be some process in place for checking in on those people...Make sure you make sure you maintain those more social events... and have someone that can dedicate some time – even if it’s a quiz or something where you can see people and have a chat afterwards, it’s nicer than closing your laptop at the end of the day and dropping into bed”*

## Guide for Piloting Hybrid Internships

This document provides additional support for running a hybrid internship during the COVID-19 / coronavirus pandemic restrictions around close physical contact.

We define a *hybrid internship* as an internship that is delivered partly remotely, where an intern works and is managed through a combination of digital technologies and physically distanced in-person contact. There is a presumption that part of the internship will be delivered in person where legal restrictions and personal circumstances allow. Where circumstances or restrictions do not allow, the internship can be delivered entirely remotely.

- Legal restrictions refers to the UK Government's tiered model of restrictions around activity during the pandemic, or restrictions set by other UK national parliaments, local councils, and other statutory bodies.
- Personal circumstances include the necessity of shielding for themselves or people they live with, and how comfortable a person is in using public transport or undertaking personal meetings, even those that are physically distanced. An unwillingness to use public transport or meet physically may correlate with low trust in the Government's approaches to lifting lockdown restrictions, as detailed in [research from Kings College London](#).

During the pandemic and the rapidly changing restrictions it requires, there will be periods where no contact between people in work contexts, even physically distanced, will be permitted or recommended. Both host organisations and interns will need to be flexible and responsive to personal choices, legal restrictions, and the needs of a specific project during these experimental internship pilots.

The pilot will be extensively evaluated to create more rigorously tested models for hybrid internships, which will also be of use for international and other geographically non-specific internship or employment opportunities.

This guide provides tips and recommendations to consider at each stage of the internship process. As considerations of accessibility – both digital access and physical access for disabled people – should be made throughout the internship process, recommendations for supporting access are woven throughout the guide.

### Preparing for the internship

Artquest will convene a meeting with all hosts to facilitate networking and information-sharing, as well as to discuss concerns or opportunities offered by this programme. We will also appoint a mentor to support all interns, as in previous years.

Hosts should consider drafting a guide on the 'etiquette' around the digital tools they use to share with interns and staff – recommended practice on video chat microphone muting, meeting introductions and check-ins, restricting use of digital messaging outside of working hours. Interns may have limited professional experience of working with digital tools in a professional context, and such a guide, even if very brief, will help assuage anxiety and help meetings progress smoothly.

To prepare for reopening your venue / office you will need to have completed a re-opening risk assessment in line with [government guidelines](#) on how to reopen businesses safely. This additional health and safety requirement will cover processes around an intern as well, and will help you check for safety and communicate with staff and your intern about mitigating risk as a result of working during the pandemic. Ensure all your HR policies have been reviewed in light of working online, including accessibility, harassment and data protection policies.

## Contingency planning

The likelihood of further lockdowns, regionally or nationally, remains high, as the virus continues to infect record numbers of people across the UK.

Hosts should create (and likely already have done) a contingency plan that includes how an internship would be managed in the event of another lockdown. Contingency measures might include more online or remote working, providing access to offices at safer times when public transport is likely to be quieter; altering or delaying the programme. Our plan is for the internship to be completed in 6 months to facilitate evaluation and refinement of our guidance and avoid 'never-ending' internships which are significantly delayed.

If you feel your internship has to be delayed, or cannot continue, you should contact Artquest immediately for discussion.

Please refer to the following Health and Safety Resources:

- [Working safely during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#), Health and Safety Executive
- [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in Heritage Locations](#), UK Government
- [Reopen your business safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Mayor of London's guidance hub around coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

## Project description

In your project description:

- List any technologies that will be needed for undertaking the internship, including any web-conferencing or remote working tools.
- Be clear about available desk space on-site if working from home is difficult for the intern and social distancing rules allow.
- Consider the minimum system requirements that equipment requires, including internet speed, and include these in your project description too. Discuss these with Artquest so we can evaluate if your intern may need higher than average specification for digital equipment, and we can discuss how this may be met, including the potential to borrow equipment from the host or from Artquest.
- Make sure your project description includes tasks that can happen away from a screen – try to find a balance between writing, creative activity and administration that is suitable for the project.
- Include relevant information from your contingency plan that could have an impact on the intern's role. For example, if a lockdown were to delay an exhibition, note alternative tasks that could be given instead.

## Ahead of the interview

Creative Access have written a [10-step guide to remote interviewing](#), aimed at both organisations and interns. UAL also provides [guidance on preparing for face to face, telephone or video interviews](#). Currently Artquest contacts intern candidates for interview (after hosts shortlist from eligible applications). Additional considerations for Artquest when contacting candidates include:

- Let the interviewee know ahead of time what video conferencing platform will be used and give them time to practice. Recommend they do a test run with a friend or family member to ensure they are familiar with the technology, or to test with a member of the Artquest team who will not take part in the interview.

- Request the candidate does a connection speed test before the interview using a tool such as [Speedtest.net](#) or [Netflix's Fast speed checker](#). They will need between 150 Kbps and 1.1 Mbps for a [smooth Zoom video call, with lower requirements for voice-only](#).
- Ask the candidate whether they can find a quiet and private space for a remote interview and offer a different interview option if they can't. Offer to be flexible with timing if there are only specific times when the candidate can find a quiet and private space.
- Assure the candidate that technical glitches are normal, and that if something goes wrong they can phone instead. Provide conference calling details with the interview invitation.
- Use language that isn't likely to make the candidate feel inadequate if they can't meet requirements, such as 'We're asking so we can best support you'.
- Suggest they practice interview techniques on [UAL's interview simulator tool](#): for advice, information, sample questions and a mock interview tool. Includes common interview questions and guidance on how to answer them, advice from employers, and about body language, video interview techniques, salary negotiation and more.

### **During the interview**

The interview is a good time to talk about some of the issues and concerns that hybrid internships are raising. You could:

- Discuss how the host and intern will work together using digital tools and the circumstances under which physical meetings could be considered
- Discuss how the host will maintain a sense of connection between the intern, line manager and wider team
- Check the applicant's accessibility requirements and contact Artquest if there are any requirements you are unsure if you can accommodate. Ensure the intern knows that their success at interview is not contingent on accessibility needs. Does the intern:
  - Have access to a safe, quiet place to work?
  - Have access to a chair and desk?
  - Have access to a laptop, headset and microphone?
  - Have fast enough internet connection to accommodate the digital tools you use?
  - Have any other access requirements?
    - Artquest will try to mitigate access and other tech requirements on a case-by-case basis
- Ask if they have any other concerns about digital working
- Discuss options for working remotely for when the intern is unable to physically access the space.

### **At induction**

It can be hard to join an organisation when you haven't met anyone physically, and for interns who have little workplace experience this could be even more daunting. The interns we interviewed mentioned that it is helpful if hosts don't assume knowledge during induction, and that any social elements are welcome. As Joshua put it "Really what you want to do on your first day is make friends".

Here are some suggestions for how to induct and onboard digital interns:

- Prepare all content to be shared in advance, and use the chat function of your video call software to share this as the meeting progresses. This will bring the content to life through

discussion and encourages questioning, rather than a static document for the intern to look through it in their own time.

- Agree the circumstances under which meeting recordings may be taken, and be clear on what will happen afterwards – for example, will there be follow-up notes from meetings with actions? If video calls are going to be recorded by the intern or host for any reasons, including accessibility, agree that recordings must not be shared with anyone outside the host organisation, unless with explicit consent.
- Discuss data privacy and protection.
  - Clarify that if personal equipment is being used for work, that all data and documents remain the possession of the host organisation and cannot be used for any other purpose.
  - Also clarify that all data must be deleted from personal devices at the end of the internship.
  - Suggest that they create a work profile if using a personal computer to make deleting data and documents simpler.
  - Consider cloud storage for business so that work documents are not held locally on intern's computer.
- Share your risk assessment, discuss your health and safety policies, and clarify any physical distancing or other safety measures that are in place in the workplace.
- Share your contingency plan for when restrictions change and ensure the intern is aware of what will happen in the event of restrictions being increased or relaxed.
- Check that the intern knows any specialist software needed and, if not, provide training early in the internship.
- Agree how you will communicate and stick to this consistently. Consider using formal and informal channels and listen to what the intern uses already. If you use social network channels, such as WhatsApp, establish a clear group purpose and principles, and stick to them. Do not require the intern to be in contact outside their working hours, and ensure that internal communications are compliant with GDPR.
- Provide an overview of how you expect people to behave online, or establish that this will be considered as time passes – from muting your microphone on a meeting call to expectations around communication response times, the intern will likely have no prior experience.
- Encourage colleagues who will regularly engage with the intern while they are in post to introduce themselves in their first few days. Explore scope for early informal or social activity: working online can limit people's ability to form relationships with colleagues, and some structure will likely be required to support the intern to connect with the team.
- Avoid making assumptions about what the intern knows about the sector, the organisation or the tasks required.
- Check the pace of your work, make sure the intern is following, and that they ask questions where needed.
- Establish a routine regular for online check-ins between the intern and their line-manager.

### **During the internship: wellbeing and inclusion**

Promoting wellbeing during a hybrid internship is an important part of the AWP programme. The interns we spoke to noted that the biggest challenges for their wellbeing were excessive screen time and not being able to socialise. In particular, online meetings can be more difficult for interns with

anxiety, where cameras are turned off. Talk to your intern and decide between you when cameras should be off or on.

Dr Megan Lawrence, Microsoft's Senior Accessibility Technical Evangelist recommends the following [strategies for maintaining good mental health](#):

- **Unplug:** The everyday presence of technology in our lives can encourage us to “always be on” or feel a need to be constantly connected to our devices. But we all need to disconnect in order to recharge
- **Don't skip the self-care:** When you are not physically in the office you don't have the same cues. For example, the smell of other people's lunches in the hallways to remind you it's time for meals
- **Be mindful of others:** You can build a culture of emotional inclusion with your team by checking in regularly with colleagues. Also, be mindful of helping others get the downtime they need

Following these strategies, you could:

- Establish clear boundaries around the working day and when interns should switch off.
- Be thoughtful about when emails are sent and consider timing them to arrive on the interns' working days only and/or provide interns with an organisational email address so they can keep work separate from personal communication. As noted above, recommending a separate work-only profile / account on personal equipment can help with this too.
- Find tasks the intern can do away from a screen and be more creative.
- Alternate phone calls with video calls so a meeting can take place while walking around, and create a protocol for online meetings etiquette around interrupting / interjecting and video use.
- Consider check-ins for a few minutes at the beginning of meetings for emotional sense-checking.
- Offer to record meetings so that the intern can watch them back afterwards to avoid information overload.<sup>12</sup> Be clear that these recordings must not be shared outside of the organisation.
- Reduce hour-long meetings to 50 minutes, and 30-minute meetings to 25 minutes, to account for time that people would normally spend settling into and leaving a physical space
- Build wellbeing conversations with the intern and the wider team into the internship.

Encourage the intern to:

- Take a full lunch break away from the screen.
- Block out several 15-minute breaks away from the screen into each day. If they are using a digital calendar, they can block these break times in and get reminders.
- Regularly stretch and move, or even do some '[deskercise](#)' during work hours
- Consider website blockers like [StayFocusd](#) for Chrome and [Freedom](#) for Safari to help focus on work. These allow people to set timers on non-work-related websites for a set period
- Ask questions at any time. Asking questions online (rather than casually in person) can feel awkward, so reassure them it's OK. Consider having more than one person available to answer questions, or find alternative channels for asking quicker or more involved questions to help alleviate anxiety and self-consciousness.

You could also consider the Canadian Federal Government's guidelines that went [viral on Twitter](#) and was adopted by Artquest in the early days of March 2020 lockdown:

1. You're not "working from home", you are "at your home, during a crisis, trying to work"
2. Your personal, physical, mental and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now
3. You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours
4. You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how others are coping
5. You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping
6. Your team's success will not be measured the same way it was when things were normal

### **During the internship: digital tools and in-person working**

Where in-person working is not possible, digital tools will have to be used. Conventional video-conferencing and digital task management tools may be all you need to facilitate the internship, but more experimental meetings and events are possible too. You could explore:

- [House Party](#), a social networking app that allows up to eight people to video chat at once in a "room". Users can have infinite rooms and float between them. The app is available on [iOS](#), [Android](#), [Mac](#), [PC](#), and as a [Google Chrome extension](#)
- [Online town](#), a video-calling interface combined with a low-fidelity 2D game. It allows users to have multiple separate video chats at the same time, and enter and exit them, as if at a real party or event. The developer recently released a paid version with more features, called [Gather](#).
- [Discord](#), a voice, video and text communication service used by over a hundred million people to hang out and talk with their friends and communities
- [Animal Crossing](#), a social simulation game created by Nintendo, requiring a video game console
- [Mural](#), a visual collaboration tool. This is a paid-for service, but they do offer a scheme and discounts for some non-profit organisations
- [Miro](#), an online collaborative whiteboard platform

### **Community & social cohesion**

It can be challenging to create informal moments of social connection that would happen organically in an in-person internship, but it can be done online or in a hybrid model. Such activity benefits all staff, not just an intern. [Recent research on the importance of small talk](#) in offices showed that brief, superficial, or trivial conversations unrelated to work contributes to employees' positive emotions, promotes well-being and fosters good workplace citizenship. Here are some recommendations from [Creative Access](#):

*"Be social: Reinforcing a sense of belonging is imperative in maintaining confidence and morale. Continuing to interact socially, and not solely for the purposes of work, can allow interns to feel part of the team. One way to do this is to establish time to socialise in the first few minutes of a catch-up call. Ask your intern what they did in the evening after work, or if this is a Monday catch-up, ask them what they did over the weekend.*

*Alongside this, don't hesitate to also arrange calls which may exclusively be social. As you would arrange work lunches or drinks in person, try to arrange something similar with your intern and the wider team through a video call if possible. Efforts such as these would be*

*greatly valued by your intern and in turn, they will feel much more comfortable to speak with you openly when it's time to talk about work.”*

As well as suggestions on pp13-14 on nurturing increased informal social contact during the internship, here are some other things you could try:

- Include interns in all remote meetings where confidentiality allows and explore other opportunities for work shadowing
- Support simple online relationship-building activities (discussing a relevant text / book / film, attending a webinar or panel discussion)
- Schedule social events such as virtual lunch or coffee breaks, digital staff away days, group studio visits or informal conversations with artists
- Encourage interns to stay engaged but ensure that social opportunities are built into working hours. After work social events such as after work drinks on video chat should be optional
- Consider where moments of celebration or reward happen within the internship, and how they can be maintained. For example, offer access to artists either digitally (interviews, meetings, co-working sessions) or physically, where health and safety permits
- Collaborate with other hosts and Artquest on the AWP programme: cross-partner professional development workshops (as in 2019) will continue, allowing interns and hosts to participate in best-practice and knowledge sharing, and share successes and challenges

### **Online meeting tips**

It can be challenging to 'humanise' video-calls, and many people experience 'Zoom fatigue'. Here are a few tips to help:

- For small-scale meetings, verbally acknowledge each participant as they arrive. For larger meetings, encourage participants to say hello in the chat and verbally acknowledge that this is happening
- Allow for a few moments for relaxed informal interactions before the meeting starts
- Use more explicit [gestures to replace non-verbal cues](#) – make heart with your hands, smile, give a visible thumbs up
- Try to ask everyone in the meeting a specific question so they have a chance to speak
- Use the chat function to encourage engagement and make sure you respond – for larger meetings, have a chat monitor on hand in case you miss a question
- Make it clear that it's OK for participants to take a break, go to the loo or temporarily turn off their camera or mic
- Consider using a flagging system that allows people to indicate if they're not comfortable with their camera on for any reason (kids running around, family members being present, feeling self-conscious)
- More [tips on online meetings and peer mentoring](#) is on Artquest, based on our Z-Crits pilot programme

## Recommendations for Artquest

### Overview of additional roles and responsibilities for hybrid internships

Artquest	Host organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide all AWP Internship programme features as outlined in p3 of this report</li> <li>• Ensure adequate technical support for interviews, including back-up facilities for conference calling in case of below spec intern digital access</li> <li>• Encourage interns, as recent graduates, to connect with Creative Shift programmes</li> <li>• Ensure interns have sufficient digital access during their internship: provide internet dongles and equipment where necessary</li> <li>• Continue to ensure interns feel safe in their working environment</li> <li>• Contract a mentor to hold regular check-ins with interns and support wellbeing</li> <li>• Continue to learn from the pilot and refine this guidance with new learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide all AWP Internship programme features as outlined on p3 of this report</li> <li>• Provide a safe environment for interns working on site and conform to Government health and safety guidelines</li> <li>• Have a risk assessment and safety measures in place, and share these with staff and interns</li> <li>• Establish a contingency plan for the internship in the event of another lockdown</li> <li>• Ensure project descriptions include any technologies needed, including web-conferencing or remote working tools</li> <li>• Consider staff and intern social activities, either planned or time resourced by host</li> </ul>

### Recommendations for a pilot

- Facilitate sharing of hosts' risk assessments with interns and all staff and encourage interns to report to Artquest or the mentor if they feel unsafe during the internship. Emphasise 'open door' policy and that conversations are treated confidentially and are not reported to their host without the intern's consent.
- Facilitate peer mentoring networks for hosts and interns to share experiences and best practice
- Encourage contingency planning that is already risk assessed so interns can more easily switch between live and virtual working in the event of another lockdown
- Encourage hosts to consider their online meeting culture and the use of webcams where interns may be uncomfortable about showing their surroundings at all times
- Consider and test digital tools that interns may already be used to, and that staff could benefit from, as outlined above
- Set aside funds for equipment such as laptops, SIM cards or dongle access to 5G should they be necessary
- Continue to provide supplementary career support 1:1s for interns, and link to [existing UAL support](#), such as Careers and Employability's [Graduate Support 1-2-1s or Career Discussion 1-2-1s](#)
- Share these [top tips](#) from a digital intern as well as the recommendations from the interns' interviews
- Scope and provide an overview of welfare programmes available to graduates at UAL, such as student counselling
- Scope possibility of external desk space if this is not available at intern's home or via host organisation
- Set aside funds for alternative travel arrangements for shielding interns / those at higher risk when travel is necessary for the role

- In discussion with partners, consider unconscious bias training to prepare for interviews and training for online interviews, where budget can be found

#### **Recommendations for a hybrid / digital internship scheme – longer term**

- Consider 100% digital internship opportunities for interns who live further away from hosts – possibly expanding the programme to include HEIs outside of London who contribute financially to an expanded programme.
- Run workshops exploring online community cultures for all interns and hosts, tackling topics like webcam culture (the politics of the camera/fatigue/best practice etc)
- Discuss with Careers & Employability about offering training in how to present and interview online in addition to online interview simulator tool

## Appendix 1: Intern interviews

### Kyle Douglas

22 September 2020

Kyle is a current BA student at Nottingham University studying History. His digital internship was hosted by Investment Management company [Sanlam Wealthsmiths](#) over 4 days during the 2020 Summer holidays. His motivations were to learn, gain new experiences and build his CV. There were 60 interns participating simultaneously. They all watched talks together, but for task-oriented work they were split into groups of six.

#### **Can you describe the application & interview process?**

Kyle applied with a CV and cover letter. There was no interview.

#### **What were the advantages/disadvantages of this being done digitally?**

N/A

#### **How were you onboarded? Was there anything that could have improved the process?**

Kyle received emails about the format of the four days and had contact with a Junior Investment Manager on the first day. This staff member introduced himself and outlined the process. The CEO of the company also met the interns and advised them to enjoy it and not take it too seriously. She encouraged them to meet and network with other interns. Kyle noted that it was extremely beneficial to have an introduction from someone so senior in the organisation, especially as she was warm and welcoming.

Some of the introductions and talks were very brief and there were assumptions about existing knowledge. A slower pace and checking for assumptions would have been helpful.

#### **What tools did you use, and did you have any accessibility issues?**

Zoom was used for the whole internship, and there were no accessibility issues for Kyle. He noted that it is essential to have working Wi-Fi and to ensure your laptop is charged.

It was difficult to be on Zoom from 8am – 4pm for four days in a row, particularly as Kyle was at home in his bedroom. He noted that he prefers meeting and seeing people in person.

#### **Did your host take steps to help you socialise/network during the internship?**

There weren't many explicit steps taken. Interns were put into break out groups and encouraged to get to know each other, but Kyle noted: "You don't need to know people that well online – you just need to know how to break down tasks"

Kyle noted that during a previous in-person internship, he was taken out to lunch, which was a beneficial aspect of the experience. He felt that this would be incredibly difficult to replicate digitally and said that the online experience was not as good.

#### **Is there anything that could have improved this aspect of the internship?**

The host could have scheduled more fun or social activities.

#### **How did you find managing your wellbeing and workload? Was anything put in place to support this?**

There wasn't anything specific put in place, though it may have been if the internship was taking place over a longer time period. The hardest thing to manage was the length of time required to be at a screen.

**What was the best aspect?**

A talk given by a lawyer who was enthusiastic about her work. Also, a talk on CV writing, presentation skills and LinkedIn. Kyle noted that this was extremely helpful, and prompted him to make significant changes to his CV. He emphasized how important it is for presenters to be enthusiastic and energetic during online internships.

**Is there anything you would have changed about your internship?**

A longer time period would have been beneficial. Some of the talks were rushed and didn't allow time for questions. More breaks and time away from the screen would have been helpful.

**Would you do it again?**

Yes. Kyle would do something similar again in order to learn more about potential career paths. He noted that an advantage of online internships is that you don't have to travel, so they are easier to attend.

**What advice would you give a digital intern?**

"I think networking is the biggest thing – following all these people on LinkedIn and if you're very interested in one of their talks, actually seek out that person and email them or something" Kyle approached one of the speakers whose talk he enjoyed by email, and she agreed to have a call with him to give him career advice.

**What advice would you give a hosting organisation?**

"Try and be enthusiastic about what you're talking about and try and involve everyone...It does go a long way to have someone talk to you but with a smile on their face."

**Joshua Byrne**

24 September 2020

Joshua studied BA History and Politics at the University of Oxford. His internship was at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office from September 2019 – August 2020. The first six months were undertaken in person and the last six months were undertaken remotely due to the pandemic. During the internship he worked in the Multilateral Policy Directorate Communications and Consular Travel Advice teams. Joshua is now working in his first graduate job for the Central PPE Policy Unit in the Department of Health and Social Care. Joshua's shift from in-person to remote working gave a useful perspective, as he was able to compare both modes.

**Can you describe the application & interview process?**

Josh noted the interview process was relatively long-winded and conducted entirely online. He was required to answer a series of questions and then perform a test. He was then required to do a video interview, which involved being asked automated questions, and replying to them straight to camera.

**What were the advantages/disadvantages of this being done digitally?**

The advantage is that you can anticipate what questions are coming and won't be asked follow on questions. You can also have your own notes present, which would be more awkward face to face. The disadvantage is that it is very uncomfortable answering questions to camera with no audience, and it is not possible to build rapport with potential colleagues.

**How were you onboarded? Was there anything that could have improved the process?**

As Josh spent the first 6 months of the internship physically present in the office, the onboarding

process was standard, and consisted of a 3-day induction. He provided insights into the onboarding process for his current job, however, which was conducted entirely online. In this case, a group of 300 new starters were inducted synchronously, and split into groups of 60 to watch webinars or talks. They were further divided into groups of 8 for carrying out tasks and encouraged to form WhatsApp groups. Josh noted that it was almost impossible to network or build informal connections in the smaller groups, as they were heavily task-focused, and no time was built in for socialising. Josh noted that he did not enjoy this aspect and missed the social aspect of previous in-person inductions. He would have preferred speed-dating style induction activities: “Really what you want to do on your first day is make friends”.

**What tools did you use, and did you have any accessibility issues?**

For the remote section of his internship, Josh used Microsoft Teams. He noted that he was with one team for the 6-month period, and never saw anyone’s face. They had daily 30-minute check in meetings, but there was a ‘camera off’ culture. Josh found this unnerving and noted that this culture is difficult for people who are more anxious.

**Did your host take steps to help you socialise/network during the internship?**

Not many steps were taken, though interns were asked what they were doing at the weekend. Prior to lockdown, there was a regular ‘Fizzy at Four’ event, where interns and staff would have a glass of prosecco together at 4pm. Some teams tried to continue this remotely, but it fell away after some time. Line Managers were encouraged to be aware of people’s wellbeing, but Josh noted that it can be difficult to read people’s emotions if their cameras are off.

**How did you find the process of networking/informal connections during the internship?**

Josh found this difficult. During the face to face aspect of the internship, all 60 interns would go to the pub together after work and maintained relationships through Facebook and WhatsApp. However, these connections were not strong enough to be maintained during lockdown. Joshua noted that they weren’t the kind of relationships that would lend themselves to the more formal process of emailing to see how people were.

One of Joshua’s objectives was to take more initiative during the internship, but he felt that asking questions was seen as an indicator of a lack of initiative. When the internship was being held in person, it was easier to get answers to questions informally, picking them up from different teams without it being noticed. When working remotely, this was not possible, and questions asked were always ‘on the record’ as they had to be asked more formally by email. Joshua noted that finding the balance between curiosity and initiative is a general challenge in interning and working.

Josh also noted that age differences between him and other team members made socialising more challenging. He was the only team member without children and was significantly younger. In his current team, this barrier does not exist as the age range is only 10 years in total from the most junior to the most senior team member.

**Is there anything that could have improved this aspect of the internship?**

Joshua noted that lots could have been done. The host organisation could have introduced virtual socials in small groups, or facilitated activities like [coffee roulette](#). Joshua felt that it would have been beneficial if some of these activities were mandatory, and they are very important, particularly when there is an emphasis on collaborative working.

**How did you find managing your wellbeing and workload? Was anything put in place to support this?**

Joshua’s wellbeing was up and down during lockdown, particularly because one of his coping

strategies is to socialise. He noted that his managers could not have known how he was feeling as he was managing things adequately himself and was not forthcoming about it to them.

**What was the best aspect?**

During the first six months, the best aspect was the socialising. Being in a WhatsApp group of 60 people and being able to access the canteen and have lunches with fellow interns was very rewarding. This was not possible at home via Zoom.

During the last six months, Joshua felt that he was able to contribute more to the actual work of the team and was benefitting people through his work. He was working longer hours during this period but noted that a sense of achievement improves mental wellbeing.

**Is there anything you would have changed about your internship?**

Joshua noted that the interns' roles were highly varied, depending on what teams they were on and that this resulted in some having more in-depth experiences than others. He would occasionally have periods of several hours where he didn't have enough to do and felt his job could have been reduced to a part-time role.

**Would you do it again?**

Yes. Even with the last six months being remote Joshua felt her learned a lot about how to function in an office and improved his communication and collaboration skills. Even things that went wrong helped him build resilience, and he learned how to present and maintain relationships over the screen.

**What advice would you give a digital intern?**

"Set up little coffee intro meetings with everyone – literally everyone. It just makes work so much easier when you're comfortable with everybody and you're comfortable asking them questions and just make them aware you're new and you're going to need help. Do what you can to find your people and don't be afraid to ask if there are socials and things going on"

**What advice would you give a hosting organisation?**

"Try to have upfront conversations about wellbeing – if someone has mentioned wellbeing in the past like I had, there probably should be some process in place for checking in on those people...Make sure you make sure you maintain those more social events... and have someone that can dedicate some time – even if it's a quiz or something where you can see people and have a chat afterwards, it's nicer than closing your laptop at the end of the day and dropping into bed"

## Appendix 2: Further conversations

### **Jayne Knowles, Associate Dean, Student Journey CCW, Academic Development and Student Communities**

30 June 2020

CCW's Diploma Professional Studies (DPS) courses have complex placement years, which have recently been reviewed considering the pandemic, led by Jonathan Carson. In order to pass the year, current placement students need to meet 50% of their placement requirements. Other work is being done around Health and Safety and new risk assessments have been added.

It is easier for students placed in large companies (like Burberry) because the whole company is working online. In cases where students are online, but staff are in person it may be more challenging for the students.

CCW are proposing to offer 'Parallel Academic Activities' (PAAs), activities that UAL can provide if a placement cannot go ahead as planned. In this new programme, 66% of a placement must be completed on the placement itself, with 33% being completed in PAAs, which could include:

- External projects
- Alumni mentoring
- R&D incubators
- Engaging with external speakers
- Talks
- Professional Practice mentors
- Knowledge Exchange

PAAs could come from cross-college networks. Jayne noted that it can be hard to build online relationships with no in-person contact, and that most students are trying to get physical placements for next year.

### **Jonathan Carson, Associate Dean of Student Experience & Enhancement, CSM**

2 August 2020

Jonathan has been leading two Task & Finish Groups looking at Parallel Academic Activities and forms and communications, including the health and safety and risk assessment aspects of placements. These groups have been focusing on:

- Where students are and how they stay safe
- Changing relationships to policies like public liability and travel insurance
- Availability of placements (there has been a resurgence in August)
- Practices that are risky for Tier 4 students, such as being paid by invoice, which breaches government guidelines

Parallel Academic Activities have been introduced to ensure students can learn even if they aren't able to be on their placement. At CSM, students have been able to work from home during their placements. To facilitate this for 2019/20 they have been asked to fill in a supplement. For 2020/21 they will be asked to plan for both in-person and online placement scenarios. Contingency plans will be risk assessed ahead of time, so that in the event of a further lockdown, measures can be implemented quickly.

**Amelia Timewell, Head of Communications & Engagement (Multilateral Policy & Human Rights), Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

3 July 2020

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has several internship schemes, and Amelia is currently managing an internship that was initially office-based but shifted to assisting with crisis response remotely. Amelia noted it is an interesting time to be thinking about this, and that one of the biggest challenges is in creating interpersonal connection. Some of her reflections:

- Celebration and reward moments are important
- It is hard for people joining an organisation to feel the sense of connection they get from being physically in an office, especially if they don't have a lot of work experience. They don't get the natural cues or the discipline of getting to the office and understanding how to operate in the workplace
- Giving clear information and setting parameters and expectations at onboarding is essential
- Understanding how to navigate organisational systems is very hard generally, and doing it remotely is even harder. This needs to be thought about in terms of inclusivity
- It's helpful to make sure there's a clear programme for the first week, so people are on hand to chat
- It can be helpful if more than one intern is starting at one time so they can support each other
- Having someone experienced and friendly other than a line manager can be helpful - someone they can just sound off with and share what they don't understand
- Accessibility means considering both practical matters like internet access, and cultural assumptions about technical skills or other competencies and expectations
- Interns may be intimidated in bigger meetings, and this can be exacerbated on big Zoom calls
- It is harder to get out of your head and let things go in this situation. Small problems become magnified and constructive criticism could feel harder to take on board
- Has friends working in HE working with international students. CatPlan, now study group (on maternity leave) - recruiting overseas students to UK orgs - will be looking at what they provide. Another works with international students

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<sup>1</sup> In her article, [Learnings from Remote Experience: Work It Like a Deaf Person](#), Leah Katz-Hernandez states: "I've learned to be brave and ask people who I'm meeting with in Teams if they're comfortable with me recording our conversation. That way, I am able to go back and review if later on, I happen to have a moment where I'm trying to remember the details of what was discussed."

<sup>2</sup> [Students surveyed at UAL](#) were found to "appreciate having access to recorded lectures that they can watch in their own time, with 59% finding this useful (compared to 64% for live lectures)."