Tips for Providing Virtual Mentorship and Guidance

Use this guide to help you supervise and mentor a student virtually

Schedule an Initial Meeting After Hiring Your Student

After you have made a hiring offer to your selected student and the student has accepted, you're encouraged to use ClarkCONNECT messaging for all communication. Start by getting acquainted, reviewing the project (guidelines/deadlines), and setting expectations. Confirm a meeting time – and time zone! – with your student. Make sure to determine if and how different time zones may impact the project, meetings, and any shared work. As you prepare for this initial meeting, here are helpful items to consider:

Introducing yourself as a mentor

Virtual projects provide students an opportunity to build and acquire new skills, test professional competencies, and expand their Clark network by gaining guided mentorship from folks like you. Your initial meeting with a hired student is an opportunity for the two of you to get to know one another. It's also an opportunity for you, as the project sponsor and mentor, to set a foundation for a mentorship relationship so that you can support your student's professional development through the duration of the project.

- **What do you want the student to know about you?** Consider sharing a bit about your career journey and the work you do currently.
- **What do you want the student to know about your company/organization (if applicable)?** Would it be helpful for the student to know the organizational mission or learn about current initiatives?
- **What do you want to learn about the student?** Consider asking questions about the student's academic interests and professional aspirations.
- **What does the student hope to learn from you?** Is the student interested in learning more about your industry? Would the student like to be introduced to others in your network? Encourage the student to ask questions of you in this meeting so they feel comfortable moving forward with the project and know that they can come to you with more questions later on.

Introducing yourself as a supervisor

While you have probably already provided a detailed project description when you posted it on ClarkCONNECT, it's still important to confirm in your initial meeting that your hired student understands the project and has all necessary context to successfully complete the expected

work. Use this conversation to introduce yourself as a supervisor by setting expectations around communication, timelines & deadlines, and project deliverables.

- **Review the project once more.** Consider explaining how this project fits into your and/or your organization's larger workflow. Discuss the scope and scale of the project. Ask if the student has any questions about how the project or their expected work.
- **Share documents, files, or other information** that the student will need to complete their work. Even if the student will not be working on the project immediately, now is a good time to make sure that they are set with any documents, files, or information necessary for completing their work.
- **Confirm the student's work schedule.** Review the project's start and end dates as well as hours per week your student is expected to work. Should the student work at set times during the week? Is it alright for the student to work whenever they have time? Make sure you both understand what is needed and expected. This is also a good time to share your time zone with the student (in case it is different than theirs), and confirm the student's time zone so that you can accurately schedule check ins. Discuss any implications different time zones may have moving forward.
- **Schedule regular check-in meetings** for progress updates and feedback. Determine what format works best for both you and the student. Video conferencing on a platform like Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype, or Zoom? Regularly scheduled phone conversations?
- **Outside of scheduled check-ins, let the student know how best to get in touch with you if they have questions or concerns.** Consider using platforms such as gchat or slack so that you can easily stay in touch. Microsoft Teams is another platform that supports fast messaging, so long as both users are logged in. If applicable, share any best-practice policies your organization has for using messaging platforms.
- **Discuss the project timeline.** Will there be small deliverables or drafts due throughout the duration of the project? Is everything expected to be turned in at once? Will you check in with the student after each deliverable is completed? How and when should final deliverables be submitted?

Making the Most of Check-in Meetings

Regular check-in meetings are an important element of ClarkCONNECT Projects. Check-ins allow you and the student to review project progress, troubleshoot and overcome pain points, and share updates with one another. These meetings are also a great opportunity to offer mentorship and support the student's professional development.

- **Spend some time talking with the student about what they've accomplished since you last met.** Review completed tasks and discuss next steps. Make sure you allot time for student questions and ask them how you can offer guidance or support with upcoming tasks.
- **Provide information about any new developments** that may impact (amend or change the course of) the student's work.
- **Leave time to help the student explore what they are learning through this experience.** Has this project sparked a new curiosity? Interest in developing a skill? Are there resources you can share for the student to learn more? Can you connect them with other professionals in your field?

Completing the Project and Offering Constructive Feedback

As the project comes to an end, use your final check-in meeting to ensure that everything is completed to your specifications and reflect upon insights your student gained from this experience.

- **Reconfirm with the student how to submit final deliverables before the project is scheduled to end.** Depending on your project, you may want to consider providing the student with an opportunity to present their work to you and your colleagues over a conferencing platform like Zoom.
- **Allocate a set date and time for the student to discuss their work.** During this wrap up conversation, you should also leave time to ask them questions and provide feedback.
- **Feedback is important.** When and where appropriate, you should provide feedback to the student on their work. The project that you are sponsoring is a learning opportunity for your student, and your feedback is an important part of their professional growth. Concrete and constructive feedback will help in the development process. Consider also discussing the student's skills, strengths, and growth.
- ClarkCONNECT is a community of Clarkies, and we welcome your ongoing mentorship and continued communication with students on the platform.