



Setting up a Communication & Work Plan for Your Summer Research Experience

Congratulations on starting your summer internship! The first step for you to be able to “hit the ground running” in an intensive summer experience is to for you and your mentor(s) (including your PI and day-to-day mentor, if applicable) to establish a clear plan for your progress.

Communication and work plans should include:

- Work schedule*** – like any work environment, summer internships have specific work hours, but unlike a 9-5 job, those hours might require some flexibility depending on the stage that your work or project is in. For example, base hours in your group may be 9am – 5pm, 10am-6pm, etc. but at times, as when you might be running long processes, you stay that day until the job gets done. Sometimes, you may even need to drop in on the weekend for time-sensitive tasks. Discussing your regular work hours and frequent check-ins with your mentor(s) will make it clear when adjustments need to be made.
**NOTE: Your mentors have all been provided with your program calendar, including seminars, excursion dates, and events. They will, however, appreciate reminders from you.*
- Supervision** – to whom will you report and what will be the frequency of your reporting/meetings?
- Communication** – how you will approach your mentor (or others in the group) with questions (e.g., does your mentor prefer you approach him/her with questions on an as-needed, daily, or weekly basis?); does your mentor prefer you to email questions or save them for an in-person meeting?
- Meeting schedule with your mentor and other research group members** – consider how often you will meet in-person with your day-to-day mentor and main faculty mentor (if different). When are group meetings? Is there any time that your mentor might be away at a conference or some other obligation? With whom will you check in during that time, or does your mentor prefer to communicate via email, phone, Skype or other method?
- Orientation & Onboarding** – Summer internships require training and orientation, which may include: safety, equipment, shadowing/assisting other group members to learn protocols, library or literature searches, ethics, training for work with humans (through UW Human Subjects Division) or animals and animal care (through UW Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee).
- Record keeping** – It’s important that you and your mentor agree on how you will document your work, i.e. whether you will keep a journal or lab notebook according to existing protocol in your group, and/or other documentation of your work (be sure to discuss format, who will have access to it, & any related “ownership” of intellectual property issues).
- Learning Goals & Benchmarks** – What are your intermediate (short-term) project goals? Denote them daily and weekly and realize that you will return often to adjust timelines as your project evolves and progresses.
- Work products & evaluation** – weekly and quarterly, including:
 - Any work products that will be used as a basis for successful completion of your summer internship — abstract, poster, report, final product, etc.
 - Presentations: in your group, at the Summer Research Poster Session, and/or other conferences or venues

By documenting a strong communication and work plan, mentees and mentors clarify expectations and ensure successful progress. In many cases, mentors won’t ask you to submit a written plan but will rely on ongoing discussions to clarify the points above. However, as a mentee, you will need to take initiative to write up these points as you understand them and share them with your mentor.