

# Supervisor- WORK FROM HOME GUIDE

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## *SUPERVISING A REMOTE STUDENT EMPLOYEE*

Supervising an employee without day-to-day oversight presents unique challenges. **Collaboration, team integration, time management, and productivity** can all be impacted during a remote student employment experience.

This guide will help you **ensure the success of your student employees** when they are working from home.



GitLab's recent *Remote Work Report* found **86%** of respondents believe that **the future of work is remote**

## *Onboarding*

- Review the [Onboarding Checklist](#) for supervisors
- Identify **IT and equipment needs** (e.g., work laptop, monitors, other office supplies)
  - Access to shared drives
  - Student employee's need to connect to McGill's Virtual Private Network (VPN) to [access departmental files from off campus](#).
  - [VPN activation instructions](#)
  - Students can contact IT Services directly for support at [ITSupport@mcgill.ca](mailto:ITSupport@mcgill.ca) or 514-398-3398
- **Introduce new student employees** to your team using the [Welcome Email Announcement template](#)
  - Confirm their work email address and share it with the team
  - Add them to relevant email lists and staff meetings
- **Direct them to [Onboarding Central](#)** and encourage them to become familiar with the contents
  - [Onboarding Checklist](#)
  - [Student Employee Handbook](#)
  - [Work from Home Guide](#)
  - [FAQs](#)
- **Discuss your unit's major goals/projects**, and key stakeholders and collaborators they will work with
  - Encourage team members to meet with the new employee virtually – this helps build rapport
- **Ensure the new employee knows what training they must complete**
  - [It takes all of us – Staff](#) (mandatory)
  - McGill's IT [Security Awareness Course](#) (optional)
- **Ensure new hire is not left with nothing to do!** Have a few tasks in mind in case the project they're assigned to gets delayed

Be welcoming – Sending a welcome email can help break the ice with other co-workers

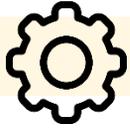


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## Set expectations

As a supervisor, you can hold your employees accountable by **defining their key responsibilities, objectives, and results**

Establish what each employee is responsible for individually, and who is responsible for what, as a team - write it down

Additionally, you can:

- Help them set **daily goals**
- Clarify **tasks and processes**, not just roles and goals
- Discuss what is **out of scope**, so they don't get led astray from their objectives

Whatever your expectations are; make them **clear and consistent**

**If they are unable to progress on certain tasks, discuss it with them.** Take opportunities to recommend relevant courses, webinars, or other professional development training online

### *Did you know?*

Accountability is one of the toughest challenges remote workers struggle with.



## Healthy workplace

In a remote work setting, where in-person interactions are less common, employees can **feel isolated**. Actions that can support your watchfulness of stress levels include:

- Being aware of your own and other's stress levels - particularly with **tight deadlines or exams** looming
- Speaking to remote staff regularly
- Using **humour and patience** with team members
- Assigning a **buddy** to help integrate new employees
  - Tell the buddy your expectations so they understand their role (e.g., being available for questions, inviting collaboration, etc.)

Even though you will not physically **see** your student employee most of the time, you should still know where to refer them for support, if they need it. For more information on the services available both remotely and in-person for student employees, visit [Student Services](#).

Combat isolation by **getting the team together either remotely or in-person**. Come up with a planned **team-building activity** to foster a sense of fun and cohesion.

See additional resources for **free party games** you can play online!



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## Communication

In every survey of people that work from home, **the #1 problem they report experiencing is communication.** However important we all think communication is in general, it is even more important when working remotely

It is key to tell your student employee **how and when** you prefer them to communicate questions and seek guidance. For example, you may prefer questions to be sent via email instead of chat

Working remotely makes written communication skills very important. In some cases, coaching may be required, so seize the opportunity to help them develop professional [email skills](#)

*Main takeaway-*  
*Don't hesitate to over-communicate!*

"API"

**Assume positive intent!** whenever you're unsure about someone's messaging – misunderstandings happen all the time over written communications, due to a lack of context.

**Don't forget the 'one-on-one' meetings** - Depending on the role, this may be a **quick daily check in**, or a weekly call. Take these opportunities to:

- Ask them **"how do you feel?"**: what's going well – or if not, do they need help? Build a connection
- **Ask them** if they're getting what they need from you
- **Provide the [constructive feedback](#)** they need to advance deliverables in a timely way



## Documentation

Documentation is everyone's responsibility. **Writing things out via email** helps by:

- **Leaving a record** for future reference
- **Avoiding confusion** by keeping everyone on the same page about who is responsible for what
- **Explaining the reasoning** behind decisions

Depending on the employee's level of experience, you may choose to require them to send **daily status updates**. This is a reasonable way to track how employees are progressing towards their goals, which also helps inform your expectations around how long things take. Doing this **does not** make you a micro-manager

If you're looking for documentation tools, check out [this](#) one many organizations use for project management

Getting in this habit will not only set the tone for excellent communication with your employees and will also **build trust**.



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## Efficient remote meetings

If you have any recurring staff meetings ensure that your student employees are invited to attend. Here are some tips to make them more successful:

- **Encourage others to speak.** It can be hard to find space to speak in a meeting, and even harder when everyone is virtual. Make sure there's time and opportunity for all voices to be heard – this is what being inclusive is all about
- **Use agendas.** Set the meeting agenda and sharing it in advance or at the start of the meeting will help attendees prepare
- **Ask your student employees to create action items.** This is a great habit for them to get into because it ties into documentation best practices
- If your expectation is for staff to have their **camera turned on** during virtual meetings, it is important for you to communicate that expectation

### TIP

Create a virtual **water cooler or coffee chat** - Have time allowed in all meetings for each member to discuss what they're working on, wins, and challenges – Take this as an opportunity to ensure your staff **feel like a team.**

Nothing is as enriched as **in-person**, but video **chats or calls** are better than instant message for back and forth discussions.



## Make yourself available



- **Define "work hours"** – If you expect an employee to be available during certain times, tell them what those times are. Let them know when they can expect to have access to you as well (e.g., not on weekends)
- **Keep your calendar updated**, so that people know your availability
- **Reply promptly** to emails. Even if it's just to say "I'll get back to you with feedback tomorrow." This allows the sender feel like you are treating their communication as a priority and makes them feel more engaged



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## Engagement

In order to **create a sense of virtual community and connection**, it is up to you to foster an atmosphere where team members are **encouraged to converse**, not only on a professional level, but on a human one as well.

*Tips to keep your employees engaged while working remotely:*

- **Support your employees** by recognizing their efforts
- Maintain connection by **scheduling informal check-ins** or by **hosting team building activities**
- **Ask about learning goals** and recommend relevant development opportunities (e.g., SKILLS21)
- **Identify opportunities** for them to connect with other co-workers



## Additional Resources & References

This guide isn't exhaustive; more information can be found in these additional resources:

- [McGill's IT Services' remote work resources](#)
- [Virtual games for team-building](#)
- [Gila remote work resources](#)
- [How to manage and engage remote teams](#)
- [Challenges to managing virtual teams and how to overcome them](#)
- [CEWIL Tips for working at home](#)

*Remote Meeting Software info:*

- [ZOOM - ZOOM security](#)
- [Cisco WebEx](#)
- [Skype for Business](#)
- [MS Teams: How-To guide](#)



For more resources to enhance your supervisor experience, check out: [mcgill.ca/onboardingcentral](https://mcgill.ca/onboardingcentral)

*\*Disclaimer: Mentions of proprietary software are merely examples and do not constitute as endorsements by McGill University.*



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