

A top-down view of a person's hands typing on a white keyboard in front of a silver Apple iMac monitor. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. The desk is dark, and the overall lighting is dim with a teal tint. The text 'Success in a Remote Environment' is overlaid in large white font across the center of the image.

Success in a Remote Environment

Guide for Students



This resource outlines strategies for success in your remote co-op, practicum or internship.

For further information please visit our comprehensive collection of [Experiential Learning Modules](#).

By the end of this module you will:

- ✓ Be more **familiar with what to expect working in a remote environment**
- ✓ Be aware of **University of Toronto resources and supports** that are available to support you in this experience

SECTIONS:



1. Working Remotely
2. Clarifying Expectations
3. Setting Goals
4. Resources and Supports

WORKING REMOTELY



Given the current Covid-19 situation, many employers and partners will expect you to complete either a portion or all of your work experience remotely.

While we recognize this is new territory for many, you can be successful and certainly add value to your organization in a remote context!

Here are some key strategies to get started on the right foot.





Secure Your Connection & Computer:

- Password protect your wi-fi connection
- Ensure anti-virus software is installed and updated
- Check your privacy settings on your browser
- Back-up frequently
- Lock your computer if using it in shared space at home
- Ensure a secure connection to your work files (i.e. VPN – talk to your organization about this)

Review resources on [cyber security tips](#) for working remotely.



Workspace:

- Find a space that is free from distractions and is relatively private.
- Ensure a clean background for video calls. Many tools also have the option for you to mask this by blurring or uploading a new image for your background.
- Ensure you have all the necessary devices to do your work.
- Be situated near an outlet for charging.



Routine:

- Prepare for your day as if you are going into a work setting.
- Have set hours – be mindful of taking wellness breaks for yourself!
- If you weren't working remotely, it would be quite normal to take a 15 minute coffee break or walk – confirm with your employer or organization.
- Dress and communicate professionally.



Avoid Distractions:

It's easy to get side-tracked while you are working remotely. The same rule applies if you were in a physical space at work – you would not be on your phone for personal use!

Instead, schedule breaks for your self-care and well-being (*get some fresh air, attend a virtual class or join a virtual coffee break*).



Be Patient:

This is a new domain for many, including your employer/host organization.

Remember - everyone is learning through this process altogether.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



What software and devices do you need to get started?

Does your organization have a dedicated IT Department for support? If not, who do you go for technical assistance?

Do you have any barriers in being able to do your work remotely?

What is your organization's privacy policy?

CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION



In the absence of physical interaction, there is even greater emphasis on **communication** in the work setting to clarify expectations as well as establish rapport.

For more information visit our [module on roles and expectations.](#)



DO YOUR RESEARCH



- Identify your **organization culture** by researching their website, values, etc.
- In the beginning, focus your attention on **observing** certain organizational norms – i.e. *How do team members conduct themselves in meetings? What are the work norms? What is the expectation of your availability? How do team members request meetings?*
- **Prepare a list of questions** to help you understand both the organizational culture and your job duties.
- Find out how will you be **evaluated** in a remote setting.



ATTITUDE

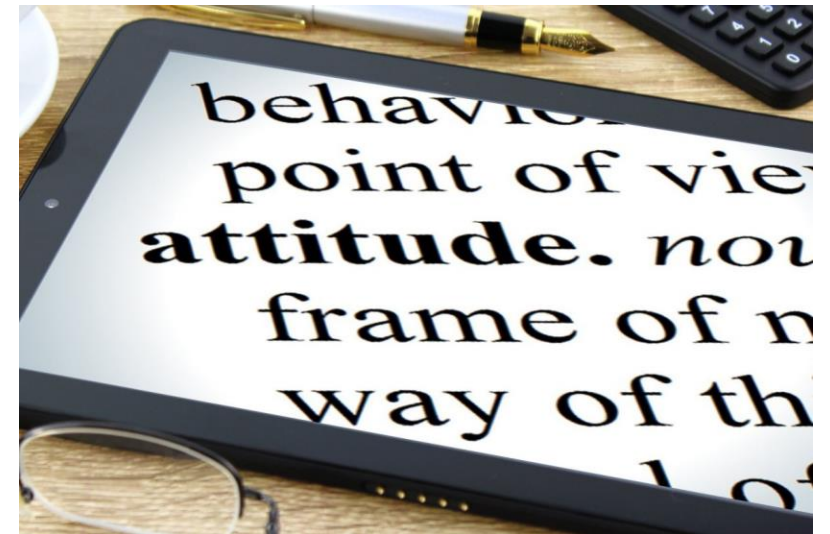


In a remote environment, your attitude is important to keep you going despite any challenges. Consider the following:

Be motivated. As you move along the learning curve, look for opportunities to add value, however small (*i.e. workflow efficiency, follow up on loose end*)

Be enthusiastic. Show excitement as you would if it was not remote – that means through your body language and tone – don't forget to smile during conversations!

Be proactive. Everyone is stretched thin. Aim to predict tasks and projects before you are told; identify gaps that you can help fill.





Check-in Regularly:

Speak with your supervisor about **how** (preferred channel/platform) to communicate questions and **when** to seek guidance.

Examples:

- **Ask your supervisor about preferences** such as time of day to connect and/or modality (e.g., email vs live chat).
- Be clear about what your organization or supervisor's expectation is around **attendance** and what to do if ill.
- **Ask for feedback** on your tasks and projects.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



What does success look like for this role?

How will your performance be measured?

What strengths or skills does your supervisor expect you to bring?

SETTING GOALS



Setting goals provides a framework in a remote environment that might not be very structured.

It allows you to align with your team and larger organization, and thus focus on projects that will move you forward.

For more information see our comprehensive [module on goal setting](#).





Specific – *do not leave room for interpretation*

Measurable – *are there clear metrics?*

Achievable – *is it possible?*

Relevant – *does it align with your organization?*

Timely – *is there a deadline?*



Aligning your goals with the organization's goals can be challenging.

Here are **three tips** to help you navigate that balance:



Create a plan

Consult with your supervisor about the organization's priorities and develop a plan together to achieve both sets of goals.



Establish open lines of communication

Request regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss your work.



Find the assistance you need

When you encounter challenges, contact your supervisor, instructor or program coordinator for advice.

POINTS TO CONSIDER



Have a conversation with your supervisor **early** on in the placement to ensure they are aware of your learning goals and how they can best support you. This will also help them direct relevant tasks and projects to you.

Set regular check-ins to review how you are making progress with your goals.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:



What are your learning goals for this experience?

What do you think are some of your organization's goals?

How might these goals overlap?

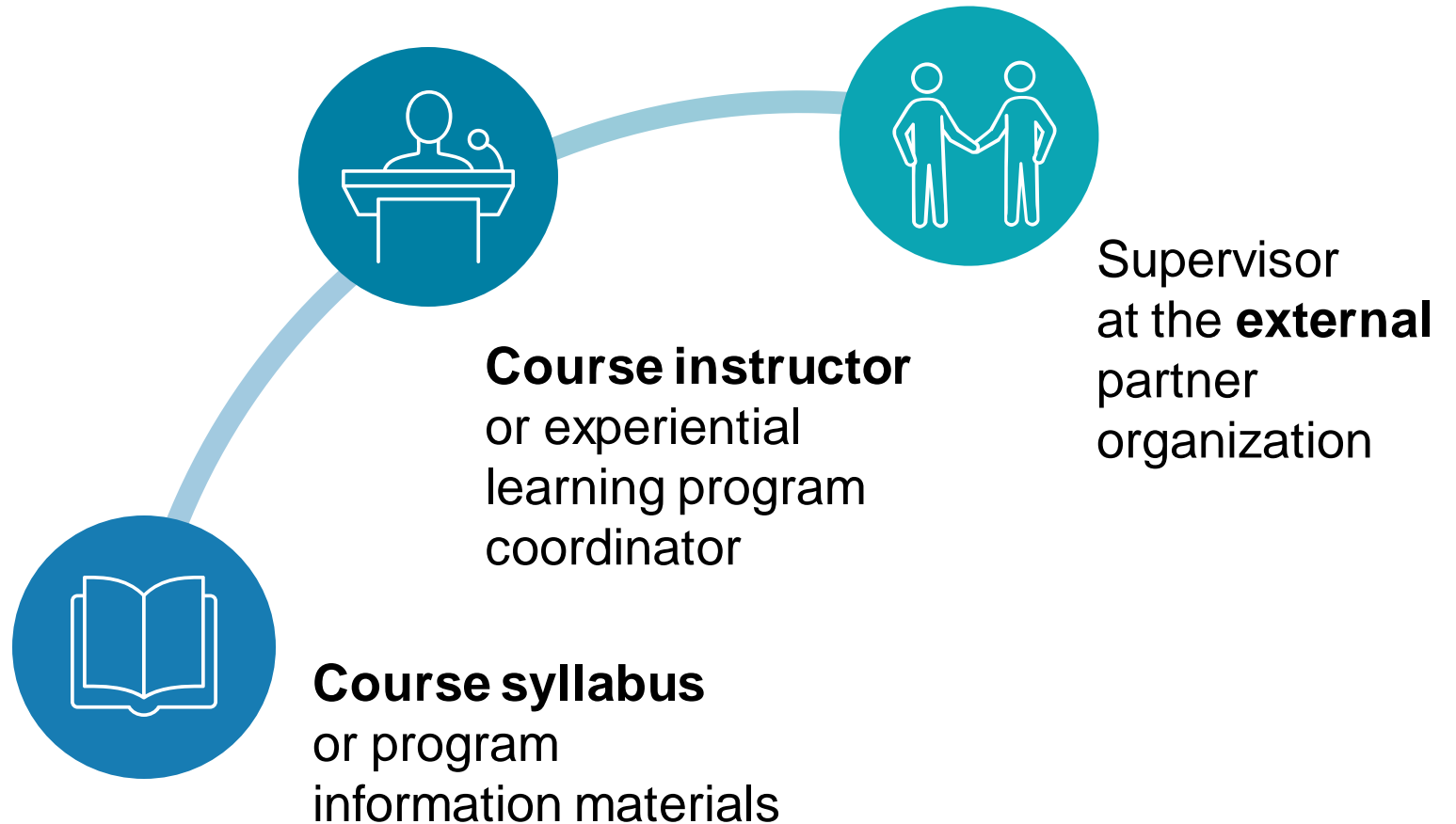
Resources to Support Your Experience

FINDING ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS



There are **resources to support you** in your experiential learning opportunity.

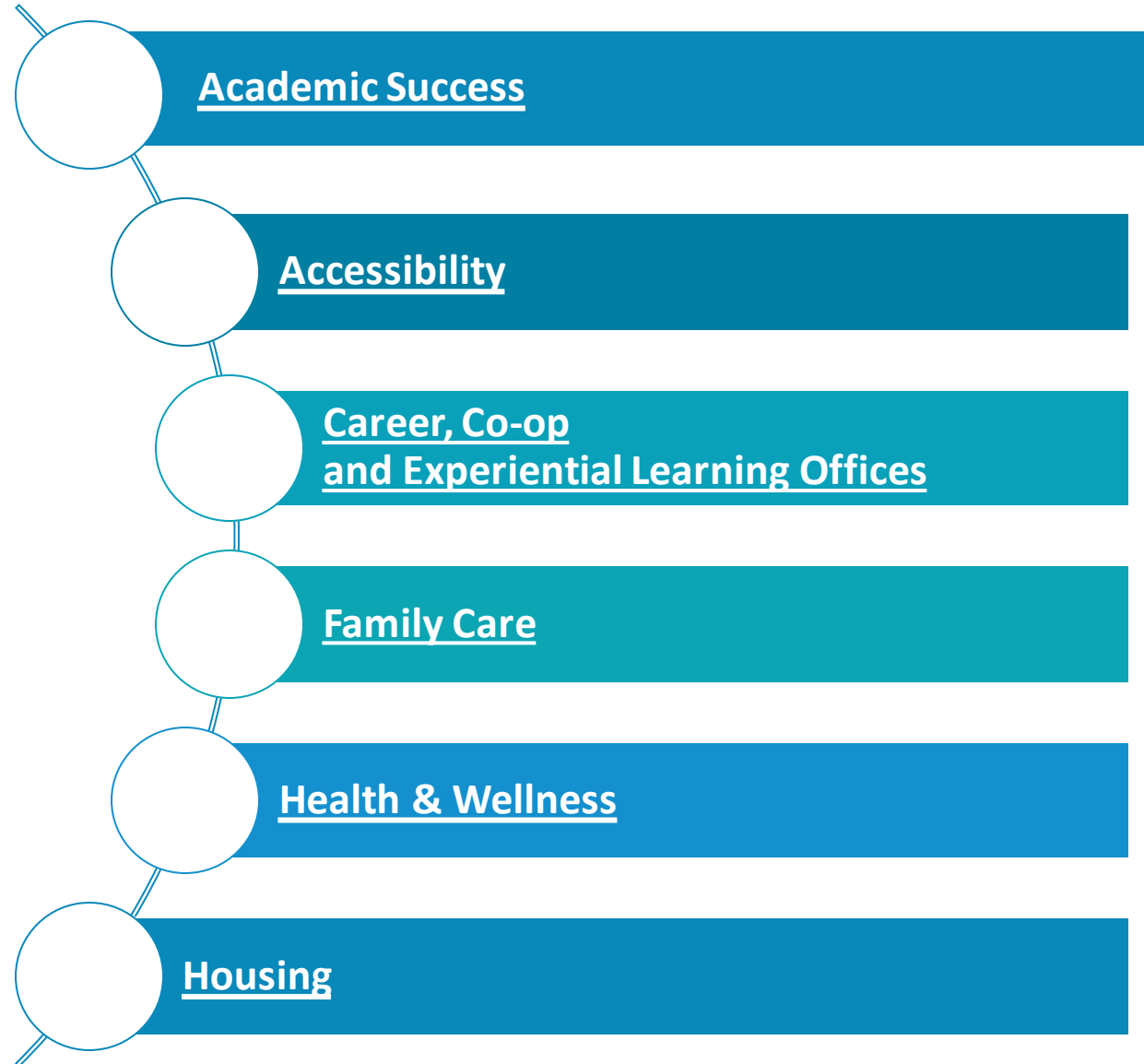
If you have questions, you may want to consult your:





In addition to your course instructor, program coordinator and/or external supervisor, there are various resources at the University of Toronto to support and advise you as you undertake this experience.

A great student resource to explore, find and learn more about experiential learning is the [Experiential Learning Hub](#) website!





- [Covid-19 Resources for the UofT Community](#)
- [Financial Support & Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Recommended Technology Requirements for Online Learning](#)



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