



HSRC
Human Sciences
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SETTING BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE



The golden rule to a successful internship experience: Setting boundaries

You've secured an internship position. I think you did a good job. Through internships, you can develop your career while gaining experience and learning more about the field of your choice. It can be frightening and perplexing for an intern to navigate the workplace, so having the capacity to set boundaries is crucial.

Why setting boundaries is important?

Establishing boundaries is crucial for interns since it helps to preserve a healthy mental and professional balance where colleagues regard one another with respect and work cohesively. Additionally, it enhances interns' work-life balance and enables them to work efficiently.

Boundary challenges that interns might come across

Limited assertiveness: Interns with limited assertiveness in the workplace may struggle to demonstrate and communicate what is important to them in the workplace as they are afraid of being judged or criticised.

Unclear expectations: An intern may feel overwhelmed and confused if they are presented with ambiguous expectations regarding their tasks and responsibilities at work.

Overcommitting: An intern may take on more work than they can handle and feel under pressure to put in more hours, which negatively impacts their mental and personal health.

Tips on how to set boundaries

Time management: You can manage your time by creating a work schedule such as diarising your tasks and forming goals for given tasks. Respectfully communicate your working hours with your designated mentor or supervisor.

Assertive communication: Learn to express your expectations or needs respectfully and professionally. Furthermore, avoid using passive-aggressive behaviour, as it can damage your professional reputation and make building relationships difficult. Learn to engage with others confidently by maintaining eye contact and good posture.

Set realistic goals: Learn to set S.M.A.R.T. goals to manage and separate your tasks according to their priority.

Take breaks: Take time off when necessary and practice self-care.

Seek support: Seek support from your supervisor, mentor, or the Employee Wellness Program

Setting boundaries is important for interns as it assists in building a healthy professional image for interns. Make your internship period fruitful by being clear, assertive and respectful to your colleagues.

For more info or assistance, kindly contact your Employee Wellness Practitioner at wellness@hsrc.ac.za - Alternatively, contact our external service provider, Lyra South Africa, on Toll-free: 0800 597 272/ Email: callback@icas.co.za