Guidance on Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Part III: Virtual Onboarding

COVID-19 has required us to adapt our tools, approaches, and strategies to a rapidly changing context. Students can be a powerful part of this response. The Clerk of the Privy Council and the Chief Human Resources Officer recently called upon hiring managers to consider engaging students to support our response to COVID-19 and recovery efforts

Students should be hired in a timely manner, assisted in the preparation of their workspace, welcomed, provided meaningful work, and have steps taken to ensure they are paid on time and accurately. To that end, and to support departments and agencies, organizational human resources teams, hiring managers, and students, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer has developed three guidance documents:

- Part I: Rehiring current and former students, hiring new students, and obtaining security statuses
- Part II: Pay, Equipment, Access & Security
- **Part III: Virtual onboarding**

At all times, when rehiring current or former students or hiring new students, organizations must ensure value for money and respect sound stewardship in their decisions.

Part A – Guidance for Hiring Managers (Virtual Onboarding)

How can I ensure that students are successfully onboarded?

The most important and first step in the onboarding process is making sure that all the paperwork and logistics have been completed before the student's first day. This includes completing all documentation, confirming access to the technology required to do their work, and putting in place any accommodation needs. This will provide a positive first experience and allow the student to integrate into the department and team quickly.

Work with your HR and IT providers to ensure you follow the processes and requirements put in place within your department according to the previous Guidance on Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- [Part I: Rehiring current and former students, hiring new students, and obtaining security statuses](#)
- [Part II: Pay, Equipment, Access & Security](#)

How is virtual onboarding different?

The principles, steps and practices for effective onboarding remain the same whether in person or virtual. Effective onboarding sets the tone for the student and provides the necessary information and tools to be successful. It is important to plan for the student's arrival, establish a personal relationship, provide a positive and welcoming work culture, be clear about expectations and provide feedback, encouragement and learning.

In a virtual approach, however, you need to rethink or modify how you will accomplish these steps. For example, you will need to consider how to best leverage new technologies to meet with new students, new formats for sharing and storing information, and continue to build on your skills to manage virtual teams. Keep building on successful practices and approaches as you go.

What tools and resources are available to support virtual onboarding?

Two interim guides have been developed to help managers and students navigate virtual onboarding in the current environment. These provide principles and suggestions to consider at each step of the student onboarding process and point to the many tools currently available to managers and employees. These can be used as stand-alone documents or adapted to align with and compliment the process and tool available within your department.

- Manager Guide:
  https://wiki.gccollab.ca/images/a/ab/Manager_Guide_Onboarding_COVID_EN.pdf
- Student Guide:
  https://wiki.gccollab.ca/images/8/81/Student_Guide_Onboarding_COVID_EN.pdf

The Canada School of Public Service have also created learning paths to support both managers and students with virtual onboarding:

- Manager Learning Path: https://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/mngr/mngr-students-eng.aspx
- Student Learning Path: https://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/mngr/students-eng.aspx

Finally, the Canada School of Public Service will be hosting virtual onboarding sessions for both managers and students – the Managers session is anticipated to be late-May, and the Students session is anticipated to be early June. Further information will be available on the Canada School webpage in the near future.

Part C – Guidance for HR Professionals (Virtual Onboarding)

How can we best support managers in onboarding students?

One of the most important supports HR professionals can provide managers is ensuring that they have the most up-to-date information about the student hiring process. Some departments have

established processes to provide consistent welcome messaging to all students and consolidate learning tools and resources to include in welcome packages. Consider sharing any of your tools and templates on the Human Resources Council site for other departments to see and adapt.

Inform managers and students if you have departmental learning planned to support onboarding. Stay informed of learning events to support managers and students thought the Canada School of the Public Service and networks such as the Managers' Network and the Youth Network.