



# Welcoming and Successful Onboarding Employees to West Chester University: A Supervisor's Guide

## What is Onboarding?

Onboarding is the process of welcoming new employees to the University and their unit, helping them understand job expectations and how their position aligns with the University's mission, and quickly equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and key relationships to be successful in their new job. At West Chester University, the onboarding process begins during recruitment and continues through the first year of employment. Successful onboarding requires a partnership between the hiring manager, human resources, and other campus partners. **This guide will focus specifically on the supervisor's role throughout the employee's lifecycle in the organization.**

## Why is Onboarding Important?

- Helps with building a strong sense of belonging and engagement from the beginning.
- Helps new employees fully contribute more quickly.
- Improves overall job satisfaction and engagement.
- Builds a more cohesive team and raises team productivity.
- Helps increase new employee retention; and
- Reduces high turnover costs.

## What is the Supervisor's Role in Onboarding?

Best practices and survey data demonstrate supervisors play a critical role in a new employee's experience and success. As a supervisor, you will help facilitate the process from start to finish.

Included in this document you will find tools and best practices to help you:

- Prepare and plan for the first 180 days of your new employee's experience at WCU.
- Bring your newly hired employee up to speed with the policies, processes, culture, key relationships, expectations, and day-to-day responsibilities of your department/unit.
- Ensure new employees feel welcomed and are engaged; confirm why they joined your department/unit, division and WCU.

## The Case for Great Onboarding at West Chester University

Research is clear there is a strong correlation between newer employees reporting people in their workgroup "helping bring them up to speed in their job" and "helping to navigate how to get things done at the organization" and their reported feelings of "belonging," their willingness to "recommend the organization to a friend" as well as their "seeing themselves still in the organization in two years." Research also showed that those who had reportedly had an effective department orientation were significantly more likely to have been promoted and those who had reported they did not "see themselves still in the organization in two years" were significantly more likely to have left the organization.

## Common onboarding challenges

One of the biggest challenges that new team members may encounter when onboarding is not knowing who to ask for help with technical issues or "newbie questions." Assigning an onboarding buddy is an essential step so that team members always have a friendly face they can talk to.

Additionally, in-person and remote onboarding can also bring technical issues: everything from delayed equipment delivery to trouble with account creation, to the need to rapidly acquire new technical skills. It's very important to ensure that your department and the IS&T team has adequate resources to be able to support new team members during their first days and weeks on the job. When encountering difficulties, remember to contact the IS&T department through [ServiceNOW](#)

When there are issues with onboarding, new team members may not feel comfortable raising them. Close the loop by asking for regular feedback on the onboarding experience and be sure to act on that feedback.



### Tips for Successful Onboarding

You have spent a lot of time and money to recruit your top candidate, but you are not done yet. The recruitment process continues well into their first few months on the job. In fact, studies have shown that new employees (87 percent of them according to a study by the Aberdeen Group) are not fully committed to the new job for the first six months. So, while your new hire is still evaluating if they made the right decision, be sure to follow these tips for success:

- **Be There:** Schedule your new employee to start work on a day/week you know you will be available (i.e., not on vacation, traveling on business, week of back-to-back meetings).
- **Arrival:** Make sure there is someone there to meet the new employee as they arrive on their first day.
- **Work Area:** Have an assigned work area ready for them and a place for them to put their personal belongings.
- **Ready for Work:** Make sure you have all supplies/tools/equipment (i.e., computer, phone, etc.) ready and working. Please refer to the Supervisor's Onboarding checklist for instructions and links to obtain equipment for your new hire.
- **Lunch:** Make plans so the employee will not have to eat lunch alone for their first day(s).
- **Notice Message:** Sending a notice out before the new employee arrives to inform co-workers and other key people of their hire and their job responsibilities. (See the Appendix A for sample letter to send out.)
- **Introductions:** Show the new employee their office/space and introduce them to co-workers. Also helps to assign them a buddy/mentor.
- **Time for Training:** If you plan to have a co-worker train the new employee, ensure the person has the focused time to spend properly training the person.
- **Assign a Guide/Buddy:** Assign the new employee to someone in your department who is a positive, engaged person.
- **Meaningful Work:** Provide the new employee with real and meaningful work from their first day on. Being able to have even a small accomplishment in the first week of work is very motivating for a new hire.

# New Ram Experience: A Quick Guide for Supervisors and Onboarding “Buddies”

The New Ram Experience, WCU’s online onboarding experience using D2L, leads each new member of our community through self-paced modules to learn about the university, their role, and the community. Modules include varied activities to help ensure knowledge transfer and/or help them apply what was covered and assimilate into their new role. At the end of each module, participants are encouraged to discuss with you what they’ve learned. The following are the recommended questions that employees may ask you when completing modules:

## GETTING STARTED AT WCU

- Are there any notable facts and figures I should be aware of in regard to our department?
- How does our team contribute to the values and vision of the university?
- Are there any acronyms that I should be aware of that our team consistently utilizes within communication?
- How does the team contribute to a community of educators?

## NAVIGATING THE WCU CAMPUS

- Do you have any tips on where to find the best parking spot?
- Where is your favorite place to eat on campus?
- How do you use your Ram Card on- or off-campus?

## INTEGRATING INTO YOUR ROLE AT WCU

- Where do I report in for work?
- What time should I be ready to work?
- Are there clock-in procedures?
- How do I document my hours?
- When do we take breaks throughout the day?
- How long of a break do we receive?
- Are there specific times/days that I have specific responsibilities?
- When does the workday end?
- Will I be asked or required to complete additional hours of work? If so, how is that tracked/compensated?
- Can we review the paid holidays that the university provides throughout the year?

- What are work expectations on extreme weather days (i.e. snow days)?
- Which department do we partner with the most?
- How will my performance be evaluated throughout the year?
- How long is my probationary period?
- How does our department help contribute to the strategic plan?

#### **UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY AT WCU**

- Do you have any recommendations for LinkedIn Learning courses or training topics that I should review to be successful in my role?
- Are there departmental standards for our email signature?
- Which communication platform does our Team utilize the most?
- Is there any hardware or software that I should get familiar with that is unique to our department?

#### **STAYING SAFE AT WCU**

- In the event of a building emergency, where does our team typically meet up outside the building?

#### **GETTING PAID AT WCU**

- Which employee perks do you use?

#### **ADHERING TO POLICIES AT WCU**

- When I must take a sick day, how do you wish to be notified?
- How far in advance do you expect me to plan my annual and personal days?
- Are there university policies that are pertinent to our department and/or my role?

#### **FORMING PARTNERSHIPS AT WCU**

- Are there additional internal or external partners that our department works with on a regular basis?

#### **EXPLORING DOWNTOWN WEST CHESTER**

- Are there events in Downtown West Chester that you look forward to each year?
- Do you have any favorite restaurants in Downtown West Chester?

#### **PERFORMING ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AT WCU**

- Is there additional information I should know about our purchase card or expense reports?
- Does our department regularly hire student employees?

# Supervisory Onboarding for Remote Positions

Starting a new job can be overwhelming. If a new hire is used to working in a traditional office, adjusting to the remote work lifestyle might be a challenge. It is important to be mindful of this challenge and proactively take the necessary steps to encourage successful remote onboarding.

Remote onboarding is done via technology without any face-to-face interaction and focuses on three key dimensions: the organizational, the technical, and the social. By using an integrated approach, you will enable your new hire to thrive in their new role.

## Organizational

Traditional in-person organizations usually rely on trainers or more hands-on approaches to help new hires navigate their surroundings. Organizations with remote employees must be more efficient and make information easily accessible, so documentation (employee manuals, online brochures of benefits, etc) will be essential for a smooth onboarding process. Be sure to direct new hires to a repository of information and encourage them to be self-sufficient and proactive when looking for answers.

A large part of organizational onboarding is providing answers to logistical questions:

1. How do I sign up for benefits?
2. What tools should I use?
3. Where do I go to find answers?
4. Who can help me with \_\_\_?

Here at West Chester University, a large portion of questions will be addressed during the initial stages of onboarding conducted by the Human Resources Department. The HR office offers remote Benefits orientation and additional organizational onboarding through the NewRam Experience. Encourage your new hire to spend time going through the self-paced modules within the NewRam Experience to gain insight and obtain answers to common logistical questions.

Additionally, it is important to continue remote organizational onboarding at the departmental level. Use the ***Onboarding Checklist for Supervisors*** as a guide and means to provide consistent onboarding at the departmental level. This checklist is designed to provide answers to common new hire questions.

## Technical

While tools are an important part of any role, new hires need to feel empowered to use them. Organizations can help build technical confidence by setting up early wins with action items the new hire can complete as they move through their training.

Organizational onboarding provides the access to information through handbooks/documentation, and technical onboarding is about using that knowledge to work through the tools. Be sure to set your new employee up for success by providing them documented procedures for routine technical responsibilities within their role, access to WCU policy related to their job, and ample training for software programs and systems they will be using while in their role.

Remember to discuss important self-paced training resources that WCU offers: **LinkedIn Learning** and **FAST Training**. These programs offer online training, with a digital library of over 180,000 videos, covering a wide range of technical, business, software, and creative topics. West Chester University faculty, staff and currently enrolled students have unlimited access.

## Social

Having socialization as part of the onboarding process can help team members feel more connected to their new teams, even though they don't share an office. In remote positions, it's important to encourage informal communication so that team members can build relationships. This can be incorporated into the onboarding process in several key ways:

1. **Assign an onboarding buddy.** This individual can be a friendly point of contact for a new team member and introduce them to others. Onboarding buddies often set the expectation for how to build relationships with other team members, so new hires and onboarding buddies should communicate in a variety of ways, such as video calls, check-ins, and coffee chats.
2. **Formally design informal communication.** In an all-remote environment, informal communication should be formally addressed. Leaders should organize informal communication and provide structured opportunities for new hires to get to know their coworkers. We incorporate socializing tasks into our onboarding template such as scheduling coffee chats, establishing introductory meeting to campus partners, and introducing yourself or participating in a video call.
3. **Creating personal connections.** We are social creatures, and research shows the value of personal connections. While there are tremendous advantages to operating in a remote position, encourage your new hire to be open to participating with in-person elements, even if they're optional. Participating in campus events and having in-person meetings can be a great way for a person to feel more connected to their team and work environment.

## Appendix I

### Questions to Ask During New Hire Check-in Meetings

- How is your job going?
- Is it what you expected when hired?
- Any surprises? If yes, what...
- Has the training been helpful?
- What training/topics would you add or modify? What training/topics would you eliminate?
- Has your buddy been helpful? (if appropriate)
- Do you have all the work tools/resources you need?
- Do you know where you stand in terms of your progress since you started work?
- How are your relationships with your co-workers so far?
- Is there room for improvement in the department?
- Are you making connections in the local community (for new hires who have relocated)?
- Are you aware of the resources available to support your family members' adjustment (for new hires who have relocated with families – refer to West Chester Work/Life)?
- Do you feel you have been able to manage your work/life needs since starting this job?
- Is everything OK with your benefits and pay?
- Any questions/anything unclear?
- How can I best support you and your success at this point?



## Appendix II

### SAMPLE DEPARTMENT INTRODUCTION EMAIL

Hi Everyone -

I am very pleased to share with you that (name) has accepted the position of (title) in (department), filling the position previously held by (incumbent name). We are very excited that (first name)'s first day working with us will be on (date).

[Provide brief background including where they are currently working, title, a bit of background on the type of work they are currently doing and information about educational background. Provide information on any unique knowledge, skills, or experience the person will be bringing to the team. Please join me in welcoming (first name) to (department name)!]

Thank you,

(Supervisor Name)