

EMPLOYER EVALUATION OF INTERN PERFORMANCE FOR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

Despite an increasing use of business internships, literature on their use for outcome assessment of programs is noticeably sparse. This paper outlines the use of internships for outcome assessment by a business college at a small private university in the Midwest. The process for determining assessment variables, designing assessment surveys, and gathering assessment data from employers and students is described. Preliminary results of this assessment are shared. Also, described is the design of the internship and data on the number of students participating in internships.

INTRODUCTION

About 75% of American college students are reported to participate in internships [3]. Over 90% of business schools are reported to offer opportunity for internship experience which is not surprising in light of the literature espousing the benefits of internships for students, employers and universities [8]. Despite such prevalence of internships, there is hardly any literature documenting their inclusion in the assessment of programs [1]. This paper seeks to address this gap by documenting the journey of one program that has recently incorporated internships assessment into its overall program assessment.

BACKGROUND OF UNIVERSITY'S INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The business program consists of Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Art degree in Business Administration (BSBA, BABA). With the BSBA degree, students are required to specialize in a major and minor. The enrollment in the undergraduate program has ranged from 350-500 students over the last two decades. The program is accredited by the ACBSP.

Before the mid 1990's, internships were listed in the catalogue as a business course but were not specially related with any discipline with the exception of Hospitality Management. Work experience requirement for zero credit was an integral part of the Hospitality Management curricula since its inception. Only a few business students completed internships mostly during the summer session. There were no written requirements for the experience. Through an internship experience a student could earn 1-9 credit hours depending on the number of hours worked. The credit generally counted towards the number of total hours required for graduation. It was, however, possible for a student to negotiate for the credit to count in his/her discipline of study.

After much discussion among the college faculty, in early 2000's, internships were included as an elective course in most business majors. This increased the number of students completing internships. As a result, the need for the formalization of internship requirements was felt. After some secondary research, a formal process for internships was implemented in 2002. It included the design of a learning contract (see Appendix 1) and an assessment form for the student and employer and list of requirements for the

internship portfolio. Even a career preparation course was designed and delivered on an experimental basis.

Over the next several years, the demand for internships by the students increased steadily reaching to over 40 students. (See table 1 for data on enrollment in the recent years). Despite wide popularity of internships, only about 6% of programs require students to participate in an internship program [8]. Under influence from the College's advisory council, internship or work experience became a requirement of graduation for students pursuing a BSBA at our school in 2007. The requirement became effective for students entering the program in 2008 or after. Starting with academic year 2011-2012, almost all BSBA students are subject to the requirement. The last three years have been used to prepare for the influx of the students into this program. In 2010-2011 (including 2010 summer), over one hundred students registered for the course.

TABLE 1
Number of Undergraduate Business and Economics Students
Completing a formal Internship or Work Experience

| | Summer | Fall | Spring | Total |
|------------------|--------|------|--------|-------|
| 2007-2008 | 7 | 28 | 10 | 45 |
| 2008-2009 | 4 | 24 | 16 | 44 |
| 2009-2010 | 8 | 27 | 15 | 50 |
| 2010-2011 | 25 | 48 | 30 | 103 |

THE DESIGN OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Internship is listed as a three credit hour course with the same number in the business core requirements as well as an elective in almost all majors and minors in the College. When a student completes an internship related to a specific discipline, the student gets elective credit in that discipline and also fulfills the BSBA degree requirement. Each discipline has its own section identified by the unique letter added to the universal internship course number. For example, BUS 339A is for students doing accounting internships while BUS339I is for students completing marketing internships. A student can repeat BUS 339 course as long as the second internship is in a different discipline. A student may choose to do a third internship, and in that case they must use BUS 439 number, which is a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grade option only. BUS 339 is graded on a letter grade scale. Three is the maximum number of internships a student is allowed to complete within BSBA degree. There are restrictions and eligibility requirements for such multiple internships, which will be discussed during our conference presentation. Multiple internships are used by some accounting students to complete 150 hours needed for CPA exam eligibility during their four year bachelor's degree. Also, the option of zero credit hour work experience exists for those students who either don't meet the eligibility requirement of 2.5 GPA (only 2.25 GPA is needed to graduate) or do not have room in their four year degree plans to fit in three credit hours of internships. A brief summary of distinction between work experience (BUS 239) and internship (BUS 339/439) is presented in table 2. While students have the option of doing internship during any semester, majority of the students work for internship during the summer. They are, however, allowed to register for the internship course in the subsequent semester. Doing so gives them additional time to prepare the

internship portfolio for academic credit. Also, this provides students the flexibility of accommodating the cost of internship within the university's annual comprehensive tuition fee.

The program is administered by the Internship Coordinator (a faculty member with past academic leadership experience at the College level) with assistance from the four academic departments. Each department chair has specified learning outcomes for internships in their disciplines, which are publically available to all students on the internship webpage (see Appendix 2). Also available on the internship web page is Learning Contract. Students secure internships with assistance from the career services center, student organizations (e.g., IMA, Eagle Marketing, SIFE, MSHM, SHRM), internship coordinator, faculty, and through self-initiative. After they receive a list of projects or job responsibilities from the employer, they meet with the Internship Coordinator to complete the Learning Contract. During this meeting, the Coordinator works with the student (and employer if necessary) to determine the discipline in which the student can earn credit, 3-4 discipline specific learning outcomes and strategies the student will pursue to achieve those outcomes. In addition, the requirements of internship portfolio through which student demonstrates his/her learning are reviewed.

INTERNSHIPS AS A PART OF THE COLLEGE'S ASSESSMENT PLAN

The College implemented a new assessment process beginning with the 2009-2010 academic year. This new process began with the adoption of a set of seven College-level content areas: (1) Communications, (2) Critical Thinking, (3) Business Knowledge and Technical Skills, (4) Leadership/Teamwork Skills, (5) Ethics, (6) Analytical/Quantitative Skills, and (7) International and Global Perspective. These content areas were selected by the College primarily because they were identified by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) as being relevant to business schools, and because they included content areas previously adopted by the College. The seven content areas are central to the ACBSP Global Benchmarking Assessment initiative, jointly developed with the LiveText organization. The selection of these seven areas was validated with the members of the College's Business Advisory Council. All business program assessments are now mapped to the seven new content areas, which in turn will be mapped to the seven institutional student learning outcomes.

In order to programmatically assess student performance on the identified key content areas, the courses required for all business majors (business core courses) were tapped. The College assessment content areas were matched with the business core courses in line with their subject matter. Internships were included in this plan to measure student performance in five of the content areas, because having an external assessment of student performance in real work situations was tremendously appealing. The Associate Dean responsible for College Assessment and the Internship Coordinator worked together to design an employer survey for the interns' supervisors. See Appendix 3 for the Employer Survey.

TABLE 2
Work Experience and Internship: Side by Side Comparison

| Work Experience | Business Internship |
|--|---|
| Fulfills the BSBA graduation requirement | Fulfills the BSBA graduation requirement |
| This option is primarily for non-traditional students or students who are close to graduation but have not completed an internship (e.g. rising seniors or seniors). | All students who meet the following requirements can use this option. |

| | |
|--|---|
| There is no GPA requirement but participants must be a full time business student at Ashland University and have a declared business major. | To participate in this option, students must have 2.5 overall GPA, sophomore status and be a full time Ashland University student for two consecutive semesters with a declared business major or minor. |
| This option earns zero credit hours. It costs no tuition but registration in BUS 239 or HSM 238 is required. | This option earns 3 credit hours. A student must register in either BUS 339 or HSM 338 or BUS 439. It is just like any other course for cost purposes. A student can do the experience in summer and register for it in the fall. |
| A student can officially do only one work experience. | A student can do up-to three internships – one in major, one in minor and one general business. |
| Students must complete the necessary paper work including Learning Contract, the Release Form and get Internship Advisor's approval prior to the start of the work-experience. | Students must complete the necessary paper work including the Learning Contract, the Release Form and get Internship Advisor's approval prior to the start of their internships. |
| Students must submit the required materials at the conclusion of the experience as per the Work-Experience Material Submission Guidelines. | Students must submit an Internship portfolio as per the Internship Portfolio Guidelines. |
| Work experience is graded S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). | Internships in students' majors or business core are graded on letter grade scale. BUS 439 (used for second or third internship) are graded S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). |

Beginning in summer 2010 semester, an employer evaluation survey for assessing student work performance was administered via an online survey (Zoomerang™). Employers with direct responsibility for student interns evaluated student performance on five of the seven COBE student learning outcomes, including communication skills, leadership and teamwork, business knowledge, ethics, and analytical and quantitative skills. See Appendix 4 for the survey results.

Currently, students demonstrate their achievement of discipline specific learning outcomes through the internship portfolio. The Coordinator in generality assesses achievement of student's discipline specific outcomes when assigning a grade for the internship portfolio. Effective summer 2011, the plan is to assess student's discipline specific learning outcomes using a rubric specifically based on the agreed upon outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The results are primarily positive. These results will become part of a larger data set where we plan to look for trends over time. While we are sharing the results, the true purpose of the paper is to share the process for using internships as part of the overall assessment of a business program. There is literature that suggests that benefits of internship extend to undergraduate students [4][7], MBA students [2], as well as colleges and employers [5]. Of course, not all internships are created equal. Narayanan, and Olk (2010) offer an exploratory model identifying the determinants of internship effectiveness. However, documentation of internships being used as a tool for outcome assessment is hard to find. Articles such as

the one by Beard (2007) are an exception. Beard's article is limited to demonstrating the use of accounting internships for measuring their students' accounting core competencies. This paper has a much wider scope. It demonstrates how internships, along with other assessments, can be used for measuring competencies at the college level. It offers a view of internships as a tool to assess students' growth into business professionals using the real world standards. Such a perspective may lead to creative use of internships as an additional assessment tool by conference participants in their own programs.

APPENDIX A

Business Internship/Work-Experience Student Learning Contract

Contact Information:

Student Name: _____ Student ID# _____
Cell Phone: _____ Student E-mail Address _____
During Internship/work-experience:
Student Address: _____
Student Phone: _____ Student E-mail _____

Academic Information:

Faculty Academic Advisor: _____ Phone & E-mail _____
Faculty Internship/work –Experience Advisor: _____ Phone & E-mail _____
Major/Minor: _____ Class Level: (circle one) Soph. Jr. Sr.
Current GPA: Cumulative _____ Major GPA _____
Department and Course No: _____ Credit in: _____
Previously earned internship/work-experience credit hours: Yes _____ No _____
If yes, when (semester/year): _____ Total internship credit hours earned: _____

Internship/Work-Experience Information:

Internship/Work-Experience Site: _____
Address: _____
URL/Web Address: _____
Site Supervisor (Name/Title): _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____
Start Date: ____/____/____ End Date: ____/____/____ Hours/Week: _____
Paid _____ Unpaid _____ If paid, salary/wage: _____

Registration Semester: _____ **Portfolio Deadline** _____

Business Internship/Work-Experience Student Learning Contract - Continued

Learning Objectives:

(List 3-5 specific objectives using the lists provided by different majors)

Strategies:

(List projects/tasks to be completed during internship that will allow you to meet learning objectives listed above.)

Evaluation Method(s):

(See Portfolio Guidelines handout and meet with the Internship Coordinator before completing this section).

AS PARTIES TO THIS LEARNING CONTRACT, WE AGREE TO THE OBJECTIVES AS STATED ON THIS FORM.

Student: _____

The information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also agree to complete the learning objectives stated above. Also, I will conduct myself in a professional manner and in-line with the University policies outlined in publications such as Student Handbook and Catalogue.

Faculty Internship Coordinator: _____

I agree to evaluate all learning objectives stated above, have met with the student regarding the learning objectives, and will maintain contact with the student during this internship experience.

Site Supervisor: _____

I agree to supervise this student in work experiences related to the student's field of study that provides an opportunity for the student to complete all learning objectives stated above.

International Student Services: _____

(For international students only)

The student has the legal status to work in the USA.

APPENDIX B

Learning Outcomes by Discipline as Provided by the Department Chairs

Accounting (BUS 339 A)

- Prepare bank reconciliations
- Incorporate worksheets and graphs into reports
- Prepare or pull financial reports and reporting supporting analysis
- Prepare or pull aging schedules of account payable or accounts receivables
- Apply appropriate collection techniques
- Research date for annual reports
- Assist with audits
- Prepare tax returns
- Compile payroll tax forms

Business 239 (Work Experience for Business Core)

Through Work-Experience portfolio, a student will demonstrate his/her ability to:

- Work as a business professional
- Earn at least two satisfactory supervisory evaluations
- Communicate his/her accomplishments

Business 339/439 (Internship for Business Core)

Through General Business Internship, the student will learn to:

- Communicate effectively in writing and orally using appropriate vocabulary, grammar and technology
- Use general business knowledge to solve applied problems
- Work in a collaborative fashion with colleagues, staff and supervisors
- Demonstrate adaptability, flexibility and motivation in a professional business setting
- Demonstrate leadership behaviors such as initiative, focus, and high performance standards
- Demonstrate responsibility, accountability and dependability
- Model integrity, honesty and fairness in dealing with others and propriety information
- Demonstrate understanding of ethical behaviors and issues of relevance to business community
- Use quantitative and analytical tools including software, technology and technical know-how to solve applied business problems

Hospitality Management (BUS 339 E/HSM 338)

The student will describe the experience and represent in the internship portfolio:

- The application of basic food and beverage principles
- Budgeting and/or forecasting based on current hospitality practices
- The development/implementation of a facility management plan
- The development/implementation of event planning protocol
- The preparation of a hospitality market plan

MIS (BUS 339 H)

- Increase Programming Skills
- Assist with Project Estimates
- Develop proficiency in use of Database (design and SQL)
- Develop first-hand skills with networks (installation and maintenance)
- Gain experience with gathering user requirements and documentation

Finance (BUS 339 D)

| <u>Corporate Track</u> | <u>Asset Management Track</u> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital budgeting• Forecasting• Financial statement analysis• Problem identification• Problem solving• Decision making• Data gathering and filtering• Time management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer relations• Portfolio design• Fundamental analysis• Time management• Financial statement analysis• Problem identification• Problem solving• Decision making• Data gathering and filtering |

Management (BUS 339 G)

Skill Development

- Identify and analyze business problems to formulate recommendations for a course of action.
- Communicate effectively and professionally in business situations through physical or virtual presence, writing, speaking, listening, and technology.
- Utilizing team building skills and facilitating collaborative behaviors in the accomplishment of group goals and objectives.

Broader Knowledge

- Describe the concept of competitive advantage and how it may be achieved through strategic and tactical methods.

Career Awareness

- Recognize specialized business knowledge opportunities in understanding adaptive management strategies in relation to business decision-making, business success, and consider implementation issues including; financial, legal, operational and administrative procedures involved starting new business ventures.
- Gain an understanding of career opportunities and the progression of transitional skills required for upward mobility within an organization.

Personal Development

- Identify the benefits of experiential learning by modeling strong good work habits, time management and self discipline.

Marketing (BUS 339 I)

The student will describe the experience and represent in the internship portfolio

- the research process
- the development/ implementation of a product segmentation plan
- the evaluation of product review and development
- the development /implementation of distribution of product and /or channel selection
- the development/implementation of pricing protocol
- the development/implementation of promotion material
- the development/implementation of integrated market plans or significant portions of said plan.

Supply Chain Management (BUS 339 J)

- The student will describe the experience and represent in the internship portfolio:
- The development/implementation/practice of a procurement program
- The development/implementation/practice of a distribution system
- The development/implementation/practice of delivery system
- The development/implementation/practice of material warehousing
- The development/implementation/practice of supply chain communications network
- The development/implementation/practice of supply chain assessment process
- The development/implementation/practice of integration of operations requirement

APPENDIX C

EMPLOYER EVALUATION FORM FOR ASSESSING STUDENT WORK PERFORMANCE

Your (supervisor's) Name _____

Date _____

Your Title _____ E-mail & Phone _____

Work/Internship Site _____ Student Name _____

Internship Credit in (Specify the Discipline) _____ Midpoint OR Final Evaluation (Circle One)

Thank you for assessing the performance of our students in the key areas identified by the College of Business and Economics as critical to the educational experience of our students using a 4 point scale where 4 is the highest score. Please submit this evaluation by _____. You may contact me if there are any questions or concerns.

| BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE <i>Related to the discipline in which student is getting credit (filled at the top of the form)</i> | Accomplished (4) | Proficient (3) | Partially Proficient (2) | Unacceptable (1) | Not Applicable |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Uses discipline-specific knowledge to find solutions and address business needs | | | | | |
| Uses basic/general business knowledge to solve applied problems | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| ETHICS | Accomplished (4) | Proficient (3) | Partially Proficient (2) | Unacceptable (1) | Not Applicable |
| Models integrity, honesty and fairness in dealings with others and propriety information | | | | | |
| Exhibits responsibility, accountability and adhere to the organization's rules and norms | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Demonstrates understanding of ethical behaviors and issues relevant to the business community | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| ANALYTICAL AND QUANTITATIVE SKILLS | Accomplished (4) | Proficient (3) | Partially Proficient (2) | Unacceptable (1) | Not Applicable |
| Uses appropriate quantitative methods and software to analyze data and solve problems | | | | | |
| Exhibits analytical and quantitative skills appropriate to the business community | | | | | |
| Demonstrates the ability to process, summarize and display business information using appropriate analytical skills and technology | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Overall Performance of the intern | Very Good (4) | Good (3) | Average (2) | Below Average (1) | |
| Overall how will you rate the performance of this intern? | | | | | |
| Overall Comments: | | | | | |

Supervisor Signature_____

APPENDIX D
Employer Survey Responses

| | | |
|---|----|------|
| 7. Uses correct grammar and vocabulary in dealing with target audience. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 0 | 0% |
| Proficient | 14 | 29% |
| Accomplished | 35 | 71% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 49 | 100% |
| 8. Business writing is well organized, purposeful, accurate and well articulated. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 1 | 2% |
| Proficient | 16 | 33% |
| Accomplished | 25 | 51% |
| Not Applicable | 7 | 14% |
| Total | 49 | 100% |
| 9. Uses current technology for composition, visual displays and oral presentation of work. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 2 | 4% |
| Proficient | 11 | 22% |
| Accomplished | 30 | 60% |
| Not Applicable | 7 | 14% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| 10. Comments: | | |
| 25 Responses | | |
| LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK | | |
| 11. Able to confer and collaborate well with colleagues, staff and supervisor(s). | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 3 | 6% |
| Proficient | 12 | 24% |
| Accomplished | 35 | 70% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |
| 12. Exhibits motivation, stamina, adaptability and enthusiasm for work. | | |
| Unacceptable | 1 | 2% |
| Partially Proficient | 2 | 4% |
| Proficient | 11 | 22% |
| Accomplished | 37 | 73% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| 13. Demonstrates leadership behaviors (focus, initiative, high standards, dependability). | | |
| Unacceptable | 1 | 2% |
| Partially Proficient | 2 | 4% |
| Proficient | 12 | 24% |
| Accomplished | 36 | 71% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 14. Comments: | | |
| 27 Responses | | |
| BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE | | |
| 15. Uses discipline-specific knowledge to find solutions and address business needs. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 1 | 2% |
| Proficient | 22 | 43% |
| Accomplished | 26 | 51% |
| Not Applicable | 2 | 4% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 16. Uses basic/general business knowledge to solve applied problems. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 1 | 2% |
| Proficient | 22 | 43% |
| Accomplished | 27 | 53% |
| Not Applicable | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 17. Comments: | | |
| 20 Responses | | |
| ETHICS | | |
| 18. Models integrity, honesty and fairness in dealings with others and propriety information. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 0 | 0% |
| Proficient | 10 | 20% |
| Accomplished | 41 | 80% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 19. Exhibits responsibility, accountability and adhere to the organization's rules and norms. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 2 | 4% |
| Proficient | 8 | 16% |
| Accomplished | 41 | 80% |
| Not Applicable | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| 20. Demonstrates understanding of ethical behaviors and issues relevant to the business community. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 0 | 0% |
| Proficient | 12 | 24% |
| Accomplished | 38 | 75% |
| Not Applicable | 1 | 2% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 21. Comments: | | |
| 18 Responses | | |
| ANALYTICAL AND QUANTITATIVE SKILLS | | |
| 22. Uses appropriate quantitative methods and software to analyze data and solve problems. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 1 | 2% |
| Proficient | 15 | 29% |
| Accomplished | 23 | 45% |
| Not Applicable | 12 | 24% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 23. Exhibits analytical and quantitative skills appropriate to the business community. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 0 | 0% |
| Proficient | 16 | 31% |
| Accomplished | 30 | 59% |
| Not Applicable | 5 | 10% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 24. Demonstrates the ability to process, summarize and display business information using appropriate analytical skills and technology. | | |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0% |
| Partially Proficient | 1 | 2% |
| Proficient | 18 | 35% |
| Accomplished | 27 | 53% |
| Not Applicable | 5 | 10% |
| Total | 51 | 100% |
| 25. Comments: | | |
| 24 Responses | | |

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