



SNDT Women's University

Mumbai

Internship:

Mediating Transition

from

Classroom to Workplace

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Internship: Mediating Transition from Classroom to Workplace

Recognizing the needs of students in the 21st century knowledge society, the University has introduced internship in post-graduate programmes of all disciplines. The rationale for the introduction of an 8-credit internship programme is the current policies of higher education and the demand from stakeholders: a demand identified through consultations with students, parents and alumnae. This is not to imply that the concept of internship was not part of all the teaching programmes of the University. The innovation made since 2012 is that internship is systemized and integrated into all faculties/ teaching programmes of the university. As a consequence, students acquire the necessary exposures and skills and to the world of work.

Internship is a planned, structured, supportive course that aims to provide work or service experience. Students engage in learning through relevant experiences at different agencies or organizations such as IT industry, corporate, banks, hospitals, hospitality industry, manufacturing sector, testing and clinical laboratories, government organisations, voluntary and bilateral organizations, educational institutions, media agencies, etc.

The goals and objectives of the internship are:

❖ Goals

1. To enable students to make a carefully guided transition into the world of work.
2. To create an interface between learning and practice.
3. To provide students with an environment that facilitates knowledge building and enhancing skills/competencies.
4. provide opportunities for experiential learning in varied areas of their disciplines and enhance their professional growth
5. To enable students to identify their own strengths and skills needing improvement and upgrade them in line with their career goals.
6. To enable students to strengthen their commitment towards becoming responsible, well trained, ethical professionals

❖ Objectives

Internship is introduced with a cohesive plan of action to realise the following learning outcomes:

After going through the Internship the student will be able to :

1. facilitate cross- disciplinary learning and development of new skills.
2. integrate knowledge obtained through “in-class” teaching with a hands-on approach and become familiar with ‘Professional Practices’ and ‘the world of work’
3. assume responsible roles in an organization
4. develop a road map for future career

❖ The context:

Prior to 2012, internship was a part of the academic programme in some departments like Department of Educational Technology, Special Education, Nursing, Food Science & Nutrition, Human Development, Resource Management, Social Work, Textile Science and Apparel Design and Extension Education, Communication and Technology and Management programmes. Experiences of these departments and the benefits accrued to both students and the department itself, in terms of grooming professionals who are valued by industry and industry-faculty interaction and collaboration, opportunities for placement and greater visibility, prompted the University to introduce internship across all disciplines.

In 2012, the University initiated the process of reframing curricula for all Master programmes. Major changes were effected which included increasing credits from 64 to 80, introduction of Internship and Research as compulsory components across all disciplines. During this process the concerns voiced by a few departments were addressed. The purposes of internship were explained:

1. Use internship as a means for development and transformation of the students into professionals.
2. Enable students to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the first three semesters.
3. Gain experience of working in ‘real life situations’.
4. Develop values, attitudes and ethics that will make the students ‘valued’ professionals.
5. Create awareness in students about their professional lives in terms of management, productivity, efficiency, accountability and work-life balance.

Following this, a series of inter-connected workshops were conducted with Heads and faculty of the Departments as well as meetings with students on all three campuses. Jointly, goals, objectives, duration and the formal process of implementing the internship component were discussed and crystallized. It was decided to offer Internship of 8 credits in the last semester of each programme.

Each Department prepared an internship manual that was used by academic advisors from the departments, mentors and supervisors from the agencies/organizations as well as students.

❖ **The Practice**

Internship is worth 8 credits, and requires the student to complete 240 hours of work during the internship. This off-campus activity is undertaken in the fourth semester by all Masters students. Students undergo internship in a variety of settings, both within and outside the country.

Preparation for internship begins towards the end of semester III starting with an orientation given by the Head of the Department regarding purpose and process of internship, code of conduct during internship. Each student is assigned to a faculty member who serves as an advisor. In consultation with advisor, possible agencies/organisations are identified and request letters are submitted to the organisation. The Advisor and student meet the Mentor from the agency/organisation. After discussion with the industry mentor, students write out and submit their learning objectives, taking into account their strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities available in the organization. The objectives are finalized in consultation with the faculty advisor as to how the learning objectives could be achieved within the frame work of the organisation activities and departments.

Each student is placed in an organization that provides professional experience related to her field of interest and study. She is jointly supervised by the industry professional from the organization and a faculty member/ advisor. She is required to develop a work plan that will help her achieve her objectives and develop competencies that ultimately help her in her chosen career path.

Student prepares her work plan and after obtaining approval from her Mentor submits it to Advisor. The Advisor is responsible for liaising with the industry Mentor and monitoring the progress of the student. During the Internship, the student is expected to maintain a diary and submit a weekly report to the Advisor and Mentor. After completion of internship, each student submits a report (2500 words) and an oral presentation is made before the Head of the Department, Advisor and supervisor mentor who also works as external examiner. Feedback from students and Mentor is obtained.

❖ Evidence of Success

All students found the experience to be a worthwhile learning experience, especially because they could 'learn by doing'. Some students were assigned independent projects and faculty Advisors helped them in exploring new areas in their fields. A considerable percentage of students obtained employment in the organizations / agencies in which they were placed. Many students also received stipends ranging from Rs 1400 to Rs 18,000. In some departments placement was 100%.

Feedback from students on the benefits of Internship is briefly summarized herein:

- Could meet experts in their fields
- Could form a small network of persons from their field
- Could improve skills in writing, documentation, communication, presentation
- Got insights into the working dynamics of the organization
- Gave confidence to enter the world of work
- Learned the importance of work ethics and organization behaviour, helped them become more professional
- Learned how to do performance appraisal at different levels
- Theoretical concepts were understood better after internship
- Were able to apply the knowledge they had gained from their programme, gained more knowledge , were able to learn to use new software and sophisticated equipment
- Understood the need for multi-tasking and working to meet deadlines as well as cope with the stress.
- Helped them to think independently.
- Understood the importance of accountability
- Gave insights into future possible careers
- They could identify their own strengths and weaknesses
- Learned to work in a team with different persons, 'known and unknown, liked and not so well liked'.
- Could face job interviews confidently
- Students could understand various social issues and evaluate their pros and cons
- Made them mature, articulate and courageous

Some general benefits were accrued to departments such as:

New linkages were made, the industry or agency Mentors also gave feedback about the academic programme, some departments were able to place students for specialized training for use of sophisticated equipment that are not available in the university departments, some supervisors were interested in participating in the academic programme in terms of delivering lectures, collaborating in research projects, some agencies offered that students could be brought for field visits.

Other advantages were: Identify areas for development of academic programmes, research relevant to industry needs, gives insights into multi-dimensional nature of various areas helps to tailor academic programmes accordingly.

Internship provides a platform for catering to interests, abilities and skills of students, helps to evaluate students skills and competencies in professional settings, identify the needs of individual students and provide better guidance to students to have realistic career goals.

Some benefits were accrued to the organisation, such as:

1. Opportunity to train and develop future workforce.
2. Opportunity for collaborative work on projects, research.
3. Identify prospective candidates and evaluate them for later employment.

The agencies have given overall positive feedback about students such as their hard work, courteous behaviour, confidence and team spirit. Some organisations are keen to continue internship and increase the number of students for internship.

❖ **Problems encountered and resources required:**

Earlier some programmes did not have internship included in their curricula. Some students though initially apprehensive, quickly saw the potential of internship and became excited about it. Their response made the teachers confident about implementing this course. Teachers from these departments made concerted efforts to identify opportunities and agencies for placement for Internship. After almost 8 months of preparation, PG students were placed in various organisations for internship in their 4th semester.

Even in those departments in which internship was already a part of the curriculum, the course implementation was systematized and has become more meaningful. Allocation of mentors to individual students has been beneficial. Systematic

assessment / evaluation proforma, rubrics were designed to evaluate the internship experience and performance.

Resources required are essentially manpower to mentor each student and guide her in refining her objectives, identifying prospective agencies /organizations, meeting with the supervisors/mentors in industry, monitoring the students' progress.

