

Assessing Internship in Law at the University of Wollongong

The undergraduate Legal Internship Program (LLB397) offered by the School of Law at the University of Wollongong is a compulsory two-credit subject in which students have to complete a 20 days internship under the supervision of a legal professional. The objective of the program is to provide students with an understanding of the human, social and policy contexts of law and legal practice. Integrating professional experience into the learning process, students can develop understanding of law in action through observing and perceiving the relevance and application of theory to

practice during their internship. Students are expected to reflect upon the values, ethical standards and conduct of legal profession and develop their own attitudes of professional responsibility.

Distinctive Features:

- ✔ Requiring all students to complete a legal internship as part of their law degree
- ✔ Applying for internship can be arranged by the School of Law or by students themselves, with approval from the School of Law

Expected Learning Outcomes (LO):

- I. appreciate some of the practical aspects and social dimensions of legal problems;
- II. relate the application of different areas of legal principle to the application of the different skills of research, communication, and practice that different types of legal work require.

Coursework Teaching & Learning Activities:

- ✎ Pre-Internship
 - Matching exercise between the Law School, possible internship providers and student applicants
- ✎ During Internship
 - Internship experience and journal entries (4 weeks/20 days)

Assessment Approaches

Name	Learning Activities	Weight	Aligned LO	Type	Generic Skills
A1 Identification of learning objectives	On the first day of the internship, students are expected to discuss with their work supervisor and to identify a list of learning objectives and work activities for the internship period. This statement of learning objectives will be signed by the work supervisor and submitted to the Law School for approval within the first three days of the internship experience.	-	II.	Formative	Communication; collaboration; self-management
A2 Reflective Journal	Students have to prepare a minimum of four journal entries on work and observations undertaken during the internship experience. Students also have to include a piece of reflection on how the internship has changed their view and/or understanding of law.	-	I. II.	Formative & Summative	Critical thinking; problem solving; self-management
A3 Student internship evaluation	Students have to submit an evaluation form to indicate whether they have met the learning objectives identified at the beginning of the internship.	-	I. II.	Summative	Problem solving; self-management
A4 Signed record of attendance	Students are required to maintain a record of attendance during the internship experience, recording any variations to the agreed attendance schedule for insurance purposes.	-	I.	Formative & Summative	Self-management

Assessment Type

Both formative and summative assessments are employed in the module. Such combination of methods allow assessment of students' learning progress and outcomes after the internship, prompting students to record and analyze observations and impressions during the internship.

Assessment Focal Areas

Values for reflection: Reflection on performance is assessed in journal entries (A2). Reflection on personal growth and learning outcomes at the end of the internship is assessed in the student internship evaluation (A3). The assessments encourage students to reflect on their actions during and after the internship, whether they have achieved their objectives and what they have learnt in the program.

Self-management skills: Students are expected to manage themselves throughout the four weeks of internship, setting objectives (A1) and monitoring their own learning progress through completing journal entries (A2) and evaluating themselves at the end of the program (A3). Being required to upkeep attendance record (A4), students are pushed to take responsibility for their own actions. The assessments

test students' self-management skills as students have to take initiative in the module, from applying for internship to submitting the internship report.

Knowledge application: Aiming to expose students to law in operation and different areas of legal practice, the program expects students to apply and relate their internship experience to theories and knowledge learnt in lessons. By recording their experience in journal entries (A2) and reflecting on the experience, students further develop and reinforce skills and understanding of legal problems. Students may also analyze their successes and failures during the internship in the student internship evaluation (A3), reflecting on their workplace competencies and what they have learnt about demands and responsibilities in the legal workplace.

Assessment Standards/ Sample Rubrics

A2. Reflective Journal	The journal is marked based on the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of effort put in by the student The extent to which the student is able to explore and discuss issues encountered The quality of writing (e.g. clarity, creativity, diversity of concepts) Demonstration of learning from the experience in terms of insights and conceptual depth Ability to critically analyse the experience Ability to relate theories learned at the university to their experience and observations in the workplace.
A3. Student Evaluation	The evaluation form requires students to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Attach a copy of objectives developed at the start of the internship and comment specifically on whether the student's experience achieved the aims identified, and say why/why not; State any other general comments about the internship experience.
Internship Report	All components of the internship report (including reflective journal, student evaluation and attendance record) must be submitted within two weeks of completing the internship. The Internship Report will be graded as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Supervisor's evaluation is optional, and if provided, the evaluation does not form part of the assessment.

Teacher's Stories

John Littrich, Senior Lecturer, School of Law, the University of Wollongong (UOW)

Professional Engagements

John Littrich was admitted as a solicitor to the Supreme Court of NSW in 1989 and High Court of Australia in 1990. He practiced between 1989 and 2002 in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions

primarily in the litigation field as well as a year with the NSW Coal Association in 1994-1995 as an Industrial Relations Advisor. He became a NSW Law Society Accredited Specialist in Family Law in 1999, then began teaching at UOW in 2002. He was appointed as a Lecturer in 2004 and since then has coordinated a range of subjects in the undergraduate LLB program, also undertaking the post of Litigation Co-ordinator of the UOW Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice course. In 2014, John Littrich was appointed the position of Discipline Leader: Clinical Legal Experience and Professional Engagement, overseeing the Law School's unique Legal Internship Program and other experiential learning programs. His co-authored text with Professor Ainslie Lamb, *Lawyers in Australia*, has been used to teach legal ethics at UOW and other universities for a number of years.

Motivation

In 2008, John Littrich and M.T. O'Brien issued a journal, which wrote "*Students learn most effectively (or deeply) when they are called on to participate in activities that engage them in role-sensitive,*

experiential or contextualised instructional activities that require them to mobilise learning into action" (p.62). As the academic coordinator of the Legal Internship Program, Littrich believes in the importance of experiential learning and the importance of practicing various skills in the professional field. This echoes the aims and objectives of the Legal Internship Program, which focuses on exposure to the "*practical dimensions of legal principles*" and "*perceive aspects of law which cannot be learned from reading or hearing about it*" (UOW 2018, p.4). The main motivation behind the Legal Internship Program is to provide students with the opportunity to observe law practices and assist them in their future career. Skills are acquired and reinforced in the experience of professional practice.

Challenges

As completing an internship is a requirement for the law degree at UOW, it is challenging to build up and maintain contacts with a large number of partner organizations to provide internships. It also takes administrative effort in pairing up students with appropriate internship placements.

Students' Side of Stories

Not available

References

- Course website: <https://lha.uow.edu.au/law/current-students/internships/UOW176159.html>
- O'Brien, M.T. and Littrich, L. (2008). Using Assessment Practice to Evaluate the Legal Skills Curriculum. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 5(1), pp.62-76.
- The University of Wollongong Australia (2018). Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts, School of Law LLB397 Legal Internship Program Student Handbook – 2018. Retrieved 21 March, 2018, from <https://lha.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@lha/@law/documents/doc/uow209065.pdf>