

Experiencing Social Issues through Community Internships at the University of Hong Kong

Social Innovation Internship (SI²) and Global Citizenship Internship (GCI) are senior-level courses offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). They provide students with local or overseas internship opportunities. These programs allow students to gain practical experience working in organizations in the community and to learn about social issues in the real world. Undergraduate students in Social Sciences are expected to complete one or two sessions of SI² and/

or GCI as a graduation requirement, depending on the degree study program that the students are in.

Distinctive Features:

- ✔ Applying academic concepts to the analysis and solutions of social issues;
- ✔ Combining community service learning with practical work experiences;
- ✔ Establishing a wide network of community service learning partnerships.

Designed Learning Outcomes (LO):

- I. To enhance students' understanding of social issues through first-hand practical experience working with both local and global Community Partners
- II. To identify key issues and develop strategies to enhance social development and promote social innovation
- III. To enable students to apply academic knowledge (including models, theories and/or concepts), critical thinking, and analytical skills acquired at the University to analyse real-life situations
- IV. To develop work ethics, self-initiative, adaptation to the organizational culture, and communication skills for successful workplace performance

Coursework Teaching & Learning Activities:

- ✎ Pre-internship activities: Internship Orientation – sharing of community partners & former students; meeting academic tutors (3.5 hours)
- ✎ Internship Placements:
 - 1) Workplace/ Skype (overseas only) visits of academic tutors to explain internship details (Week 1 of internship)
 - 2) Mid-term evaluation conducted by visits of academic tutors or skype meetings (overseas only) with workplace supervisor (Week 4/ 5 of internship)
 - 3) Completion of internship (end of Week 8)
- ✎ Post-internship activities: essay writing & scheduled sessions of project presentation seminars

Source: HKU 2016 Internship Handbook

Assessment Approaches

Name	Learning Activities	Weight	Aligned LO	Type	Generic Skills
A1 Internship Orientation	Prior to the internship, there is a compulsory orientation. Students who are unable to attend the orientation are required to complete a make-up assignment.	0%	II. IV.	Formative	Collaboration; Communication; Problem Solving
A2 Integrated Essay Outline	Students are required to submit a 500-word Integrated Essay Outline, articulating a title, a thesis statement, supporting arguments (in bullet points), proposed paragraphs, and a reference list.	0%	II. III.	Formative	Communication; Critical Thinking; Self-management
A3 Reflective Journal	Students need to submit a 1,500-word journal that focuses on a couple of key events in which they have learned something important. Students' depiction of the events and their learning in the reflective journal should include: the analysis of the situation;	0%	III. IV.	Formative	Communication; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Study Skills; Self-management;

		how they act in the situation; what they could have done differently to improve.				
A4	Overall Performance at Community Partner Organization	Supervisors of students at the community partner organizations complete an online form to evaluate students on nine assessment criteria related to workplace performance.	50%	I. II. III. IV.	Summative	Communication; Creativity; Problem Solving; Study Skills; Self-management
A5	Integrated Essay	Students demonstrate their awareness of local or global social issues with a 3,000-word exposition on a topic of their choice. The topic should be related to their work experience, and ideally their academic studies as well.	40%	II. III.	Summative	Communication; Critical Thinking; Study Skills
A6	Project Presentation	Students, along with other students working in the same organization, complete a short presentation (maximum 10 minutes for single intern or groups of 2 interns, or 15 minutes for groups of 3, plus 5 minutes for questions and answers) on a topic of their choice that concerns their internship. The topic should illustrate the application of an academic concept within a real workplace that could be shared with the audience as a learning experience and with their selected business projects.	10%	II. III.	Summative	Collaboration; Communication; Creativity; Critical Thinking; IT; Self-management
A7	Self-evaluation Form for Interns	Self-evaluation is compulsory for the successful completion of program requirements. Each student intern is required to submit the Self-Evaluation Form for Intern via online portal.	0%	I. II. III. IV.	Summative	Collaboration; Communication; Creativity; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Self-management

The internship orientation, the outline for the integrated essay, and the reflective journal are graded as pass/fail based on completion, whereas the other approaches assess students' levels of achievements in the courses.

Assessment Type

Although both formative and summative assessments are employed with multiple approaches, the formative assessments do not carry any weighting in the final grade.

Assessment Focal Areas

Holistic skills: The 9 assessment criteria of the supervisor evaluation (A4) cover communication, creativity, problem-solving, self-management and study skills of student interns. The self-evaluation (A7) extends to analytical and critical thinking skills, study skills in work situations, problem-solving skills in innovative ways, and various aspects of collaboration with internship colleagues.

Knowledge application: The 'wisdom of applying' academic knowledge in real-life situations is emphasized in this graduate requirement of social innovation and global citizenship. In the integrated essay (A5), the selected topic should be related to the student's work experience and ideally academic

studies. Students are expected to demonstrate integration of academic knowledge and the internship experience to support a well-structured thesis statement/ argument, and to examine the selected topic by accessing and analyzing a range of relevant academic resources and theories, models and/ or concepts. In the project presentation (A6), students need to illustrate the application of an academic concept within a real workplace. They need to offer consistent perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes based on their understanding of relevant concepts and theories, and their analysis and integration of academic knowledge with experiential learning should be consistently clear and effective. In the self-evaluation (A7), students are asked to consider whether the

internship enhances their understanding of academic knowledge and of integration of academic knowledge and practice, as well as whether the internship provides training or opportunities for application of multidisciplinary knowledge.

Reflection: In the internship orientation (A1), students have the opportunity to “critically reflect upon ways to become successful interns as well as being engaged in exploring the core skills and

essential knowledge for the fulfillment of academic deliverables” (HKU 2016). In the Reflective Journal (A3), students need to demonstrate their ability to critically reflect on the internship experience and demonstrate a higher order thinking process. In the project presentation (A6), students should provide critical reflection on their internship experience, through fitting together arguments and building compelling cases.

Assessment Standards/ Sample Rubrics

Each graded assessment (A4 – A6) has been developed with its own rubric and assessment criteria. This case study selects two sets of rubrics as sample for the readers’ reference. The selected rubrics are to support the two most heavily weighted assessment approaches, the Overall Performance at Community Partner Organization (50%) and the Integrated Essay (40%).

	Assessment Criterion	Excellent (A+/A/A-)	Good (B+/B/B-)	Satisfactory (C+/C/C-)	Pass (D+/D)	Fail (F)	
A4 Performance evaluation	1. Takes initiative to explore new areas of study and pursue better outputs after satisfying the basic requirements	Student’s performance consistently far exceeds the expected standards.	Student’s performance is consistently above the expected standards.	Student’s performance consistently meets the expected standards.	Student’s performance meets some of the expected standards.	Student’s performance is consistently below the expected standards.	
	2. Adapts to the work culture and the rules of the working environment	Student exemplifies exceptional initiative to explore new areas and lucidly adapts to the work culture.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of motivation and congeniality, as well as effectively managing the workload and integrating supervisor’s feedback to enhance workplace performance.	Student exemplifies a good initiative to explore new areas and is able to adapt well to the work culture. Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a very high-level of motivation and congeniality, as well as having an outstanding ability to manage workload and integrate supervisor’s feedback to enhance workplace performance.	Student exemplifies an unacceptable level of initiative to explore new areas and has difficulty to adapt to the work culture. Student demonstrates inability to communicate with supervisor and colleagues, and shows a lack of positive attitude, motivation and congeniality. Student is unable to work independently, manage workload and integrate supervisor’s feedback to enhance workplace performance.
	3. Willing to communicate with supervisor and other colleagues	Student demonstrates excellence in communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	4. Maintains a positive work attitude	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	5. Able to work independently	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	6. Motivated to seek ways to fortify own strengths and overcome weaknesses	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	7. Works in a congenial manner	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	8. Manages workload in an orderly and responsible manner	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.
	9. Integrates supervisors’ recommendations into own repertoire of knowledge and skills	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.	Student demonstrates a high-level of communication with supervisor and colleagues, showing a positive attitude and ability to work independently.

Assessment Category	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Pass	Fail	
A5 Integrated Essay	Integration & Analysis	Strong integration of academic knowledge and the internship experience to support a well-structured thesis statement/ argument. Topic was examined by accessing and analyzing a wide range of relevant academic resources and theories, models and/ or concepts.	Good integration academic knowledge and internship experience to support a clear argument. Topic was examined by accessing and analyzing a majority of relevant academic resources and theories, models and/ or concepts.	Satisfactory integration of academic knowledge and internship experience to support a reasonably clear argument. Topic was examined by accessing and analyzing generally relevant academic resources and concepts.	Less than satisfactory integration of academic knowledge and the internship experience, yet weak argument. Topic was examined by accessing and analyzing a few relevant resources.	Weak integration of academic knowledge and the internship experience. Central argument missing or unclear. Highly descriptive, lacking/ or weak argument. Weak/lack of relevant resources were accessed and analyzed.
	Structure & Organization	Flow of the essay was logical. Transitions among ideas/ arguments were always clear; sentences within each paragraph relate to each other & are subordinate to the topic. Introduction & conclusion effectively related to the whole.	Transitions among ideas/ arguments were generally clear. Paragraphs were built on related sentences logically develop the main points. No major digressions. Introduction & conclusion effectively related to the whole.	Transitions among ideas/ arguments were sometimes unclear. Most points were logically developed. There may be a few minor digressions but no major ones. Introduction & conclusion were somewhat effective.	Only some major points were set off by paragraphs and were signaled by transitions. There were some logically connected points. There may be some major digressions. Introduction and conclusion may be lacking or ineffective.	The organization & structure must be inferred by the reader. Most points were connected illogically. There were major digressions. Introduction and conclusion were missing
	Insights	Observations and analysis in the essay extrapolate beyond the scope of the internship experience itself	Observations and analysis in the integrated essay which led to worthwhile insights on the internship experience.	Some insights within the integrated essay gained from the internship experience.	Integrated essay tackled with a narrow scope, which resulted in few insights from the internship experience.	Integrated essay lacked insights on the internship experience
	Language	Sentence formation, grammar, and diction excellent; correct use of punctuation, citation style, and referencing; minimal to no spelling errors.	Sentence formation, grammar, and diction strong despite occasional errors; punctuation, citation style, and referencing often used correctly with minor spelling errors.	Some problems in sentence formation, grammar, and diction (usually not major). Some errors in punctuation, citation style, referencing, and spelling.	Many errors in sentence formation, grammar, and diction. Frequent errors in citation style, punctuation, referencing, and spelling.	Major errors in all areas of mechanics: sentence formation, grammar, diction, citation style, punctuation, referencing, and spelling

Source: HKU (2016) Internship Handbook

Teacher's Stories

Professor Samson SK Tse, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Education) & Director of Experiential Learning in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor

of Mental Health in Department of Social Work and Social Administration, HKU

Professional Engagements

Tse holds a PhD in Psychology from the University of Otago in New Zealand. He is an Associate Fellow and an Approved Counselling Supervisor of the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association. Before returning to Hong Kong, Tse worked in New Zealand for more than two decades. He has served in government, and non-government organization advisory committees in New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong. He is passionate about putting mental health recovery approaches into practice cross-culturally. In teaching, he adopts the pedagogy of adult learning model, promotion of critical thinking skills, and role modeling. Apart from leading the entire experiential learning scheme, Tse acts as one of the academic tutors in the SI2 and GCI program together with many of his colleagues from different departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Motivation

Tse considers that young people nowadays are not deprived of knowledge and information, but a lot of them lack the wisdom to apply the knowledge in providing solutions to problems in different settings. University students also need to care for the neglected communities, and to learn how to learn. These are the rationale behind setting up the service-learning internship.

Challenge

It occasionally incurs difficulties of meeting students' expectation in making a difference to the harsh social reality. To balance expectations and reality, one of

the academic tutors shares that *“we had to debrief the students afterwards to point out that after all, this is a commercial business; this was part of their learning, too, because there are always going to be expectations and reality; there are a lot of key stakeholders at play, so these issue are not as easy as you might think”* (HKU 2017).

Partnership

- ✔ Concerted Efforts Resource Centre is a community partner organisation. Its president, Betty Tung, commented that *“we are proud to be one of the Community Partners of the SI² program; we found the students from the Faculty of Social Sciences of HKU to be highly dedicated and motivated from the beginning to the end of the program; even when the internship is over, they still come back to work as our volunteers; thanks to be Faculty of Social Sciences for providing great supervision to the interns”*. (HKU 2007)
- ✔ The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco is another community partner. Betty Ho, Deputy Director of this office, praised that *“the SI² program is one of the best we have taken, and I can see a lot of potential in it; the interns' positive working attitude and eagerness to learn made them important team players in our office”*. (HKU 2007)

Students' Side of Stories

- ✔ *“Families living on tea villages are poor but the core factor leading to their malnutrition problems is that they are not equipped with the knowledge to effectively allocate resources, such as money, health supplements and food, to maintain health. They stick with traditional health practices which are sometimes harmful and they do not eat nutritious meals regularly. ... The most memorable part was doing interviews with the mothers. It reflected how big a difference knowledge could make. Families with mothers who were knowledgeable in healthcare obviously maintained better health than those whose mothers knew very little.”* (Student intern placed in Sri Lanka for

a study of Save the Children organisation, 2016)

- ✔ *“My internship was highlighted by the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover, where I had the chance to assist in the coordination of the event to promote Hong Kong as an attractive international financial centre for overseas business.”* (Student intern at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco, 2007)
- ✔ *“Migrant children in Beijing are being discriminated and exploited. Their chances of entering public schools are limited and most of them cannot receive English education. In our internship, we organised an English summer camp by delivering innovation English lessons, such as drama, to motivate the children to learn English. We*

hope this can enhance their chance to receive further education and free them from the poverty cycle.” (Social Science student interning for Mercy Corps to provide English teaching to migrant children in Beijing, 2007)

- ✔ “Being touched by the enthusiasm of the migrant children towards learning, I am very glad to have taught them English in this summer. The friendship I built there, the smiles on the students’ faces... all of them are the most precious memories to me. What this fruitful internship brings to me is indeed beyond words.” (Journalism student interning

for Mercy Corps to provide English teaching to migrant children in Beijing, 2007)

- ✔ “The Concerted Efforts Resource Centre, directed by Mrs Betty Tung, has offered a great range of programs serving different social groups in Hong Kong. This summer, I worked for the Military Summer Camp, where I learnt many management skills in organising a large-scale event. I had a great time working here to learn and to serve.” (Student intern for the Concerted Efforts Resource Centre, 2007)

Featured Videos

- ▶ Experiential learning graduate requirement <http://www.socsc.hku.hk/sigc/wp-content/themes/greatmag/video/whatisexperientiallearning.html>
- ▶ Students’ reflection on analysing and regulating queue-jumping behaviours in Beijing <http://www.socsc.hku.hk/sigc/wp-content/themes/greatmag/video/whatisigc.html>
- ▶ Student video on malnutrition <https://youtu.be/qMxFDzxL-Y>
- ▶ Student video on working women in Sri Lanka <https://youtu.be/wQeeYO6wJw0>
- ▶ Student video on family empowerment in Sri Lanka <https://youtu.be/78oo67IKjqU>
- ▶ Student video on Fair Trade <https://youtu.be/Ssib3mXbBtA>
- ▶ Student video on coffee farmers in Indonesia <https://youtu.be/qxh0w6LeyAE>

References

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