

## Accrediting & Assessing Business Internships at the National University of Singapore

Three types of credit-bearing internship courses are offered in the business school at the National University of Singapore (NUS), namely, BI3001 Business Internship I, BI3002 Business Internship II, and BI3003 Business Internship III. These internships are not compulsory in the undergraduate curriculum. The three types of internship courses differ in their durations, credits and the number of expected working hours. The internships undertaken can be local or foreign, paid or unpaid

### Distinctive Features:

- ✔ Putting explicit emphasis on the development of holistic competencies with internship courses;
- ✔ Enabling substantial involvement of workplace supervisors in student assessments;
- ✔ Offering holistic learning experience to undergraduate students

### Designed Learning Outcomes (LO):

- I. The internship should involve work typically done by graduates and should require the exercise of one or more of the following types of skills: managerial, planning, analytical, design, creative and/or communication;
- II. Learning objectives are elected by the student with guidance from the Workplace Supervisor at the beginning of taking up an internship

### Coursework Teaching & Learning Activities:

- ✍ Sourcing internships
- ✍ Seeking approvals from the Business School (for student-sourced or faculty-sourced internships only)
- ✍ Internship Period
  - Setting learning objectives with workplace supervisor (within the first two weeks)
  - Learning journals (fortnightly)
- ✍ Post-internship Review
  - Final Report (within 1 week after internship)
  - Performance Review Form (within 2 weeks after internship)

## Assessment Approaches

	Name	Learning Activities	Weight	Aligned LO	Type	Generic Skills
A1	Statement of Learning Objectives	Students should prepare the statement of learning objectives together with an overview of job description under the guidance of the work supervisor. There should be at least 3 reasonable learning objectives identified by each student.	5%	II.	Formative	Collaboration; Communication; Critical Thinking
A2	Learning Journal	Students are required to write 2 learning journals (about 200 words each) for BI3001 or BI3002, or 3 learning journals (about 300 words each) for BI3003. Journal entries are expected to include how the work allocated relates to learning at school, students' personal development, what is observed or learnt, challenges experienced, company culture & ethics, students' teamwork experience at the workplace, and so on. These journals are graded on depth of reflection and level of maturity.	25%	I. & II.	Formative	Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Self-management

A3	Final Report	The Final Report should be about 1500 words. It encourages students to reflect on their overall experience and the major learning outcomes. The report is graded based on the depth of reflection and the level of maturity.	30%	I. & II.	Summative	Critical Thinking; Problem Solving
A4	Intern Performance Review Form	The work supervisor has to complete a performance review form, to rate students' work-based performance and competencies (e.g. technical knowledge/skills, communication skills, confidence, etc.) on a five-point Likert scale from '0' (i.e. 'Does not meet criteria') to '4' (i.e. 'Very good').	40%	I. & II.	Summative	Collaboration; Communication; Creativity; Problem Solving; Self-management; Study Skills

### Assessment Type

Summative assessments carry much heavier weighting in the overall grading of these internship courses. However, so long as students achieve a mark of above 50, they would be granted satisfactory completion of the credit-bearing course. Therefore, the exact variation of the grade does not matter.

### Assessment Focal Areas

**Holistic competencies:** the credits of internship courses are given to the learning development of students in areas of holistic competencies. It is explicitly stated in the internship guidelines that 'to be appropriate, the internship should involve work typically done by graduates and should require the exercise of one or more of the following types of skills: managerial, planning, analytical, design, creative and/or communication' (NUS 2018a). The Intern Performance Review Form (A4) also elicits evaluation of the level of holistic competencies of the student intern, specifically regarding technical skills, communication skills, leadership potential, confidence, teamwork ability, creativity, and so on.

**Knowledge application:** Generalist internships can be qualify for BI3003, whereas the other internships

must be specialization related, i.e. related to business disciplines. The generalist internships need to satisfy the achievement of learning objectives (A1) in holistic competencies or in managerial skill development. However, it is compulsory for accountancy students to take on an internship that is related to the accountant or finance fields, which must be approved by the Department of Accounting.

**Reflection:** The assessments in the internship courses stress on the values for reflection. The depth of student reflection is a major grading factor of the learning journals (A2) and the final report (A3). The former allows timely on-the-job reflection while the latter gives ample space for students to summarize and to make meaning of the learning process. The Intern Performance Review Form (A4) is also designed to give students feedbacks for them to 'reflect, learn, and grow' (NUS 2018a).

### Assessment Standards/ Sample Rubrics

Assessment rubrics are not available. The internship courses are graded on a 'CS/CU' basis at NUS, i.e. having 'completed satisfactorily' or 'completed unsatisfactorily'. There is no grade point assigned in the calculation of cumulative average point. To get a CS grade, the student has to obtain an overall pass mark of 50 and above, and should complete all assessment components. The main criteria of grading for A2 and A3 are the depth of reflection and the level of maturity. Areas of holistic competencies, such as ability to offer creative ideas, ability to work in a team, and communication skills, are assessed in A4 by the workplace supervisor.

### Teacher's Stories

Not applicable

## Students' Side of Stories

- ▶ After the internship, some students were offered formal positions with their company.
- ▶ A student describes her internship experience as “*valuable and rewarding*”, who says that even as an intern, she was empowered by her bosses. “*I conducted one credit risk appraisal for a leading multinational in the Process Management industry*”. This student is thankful for her rigorous education to deliver good performance during internship: “*the Financial theories NUS Business School equipped us which gave me an edge over other interns*”. She is confident that “*NUS Business School produces students who are all-rounders. Not only do we possess the intellect, we are individuals willing to challenge conventions and take that leap of faith*”.
- ▶ Another student landed her dream job in the industry. She says that “*I am glad that my internships with Allegro and Samsung gave me a glimpse of what HR can do. I realized what a fulfilling and impactful role it is... You can rest assure I will do my best to attend to every one’s query! ... It is important to find ourselves a good job, but we must also* remember to help others who are less fortunate than ourselves along the way”.
- ▶ A student who embarked on a 2-month internship programme in India reflects that “*...an international learning experience is indispensable in [preparing] for the corporate world*”. The internship is also a holistic learning experience for her, who states that “*...mutual understanding [is] crucial in sustaining the success of any business dealing.*”
- ▶ Another student who took on a yearlong internship in China. He reflects that “*I have learnt that true competitive advantage comes not from the amount of resources available, but from the ability to bring them together for the greater benefit of the organisation... My Shanghai internship experience has trained me through real-world experiences to step out of my comfort zone and think out of the box.*”
- ▶ A student who completed an internship in Vietnam says that “*I believe that continuously challenging myself to greater heights would help me grow and mature into a useful member of the workforce ...I was given ample opportunities to develop my own marketing strategies, and to present them to clients*”.

## References

- National University of Singapore (2018a) Internship Guidelines for Students. Retrieved at <http://bba.nus.edu/images/bba/docs/2018/Internship-Guidelines-for-Students.pdf> (accessed 5 Mar 2018)
- National University of Singapore (2018b) Business Internships. Retrieved at <https://bschool.nus.edu.sg/career-services/prospective-students/business-internships> (accessed 5 Mar 2018)