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## **A Comprehensive Evaluation of an Internship Program: A 360-Degree Review Involving Students, Host Organization Supervisors, and Faculty Members**

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**Abstract:** In 2017, the School Education Act of Japan introduced a new category of higher education institutions, called "Professional Universities". These institutions are mandated by law to allocate a minimum one-third of the credits necessary for graduation to participate in practical training. During 2022-2023 academic year, the Faculty of Information at Kaishi Professional University (FI/KPU) established a robust internship program. Second-year undergraduate students participated in an internship program for five weeks (equivalent to 150 hours), while third-year students undertook for fifteen weeks (equivalent to 450 hours) with a diverse range of host organizations. The program's goal is to provide students at Kaishi Professional University with real-world exposure, preparing them for successful careers upon graduation. To assess the internship program's performance, the steering committee of internship program collected questionnaire feedback from all stakeholders involved, student interns, host organization supervisors, and faculty members. Analysis of this feedback offers insights into how the internship program influences the professional and personal growth of student interns. This assessment takes the form of a 360-degree review, encompassing perspectives from host organizations, students themselves, and faculty members. The study includes a descriptive analysis examining the correlation between student satisfaction with the internship

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experience and the host organization's satisfaction with student abilities. The result of this analysis shows how the internship program impacts on professional, personal growth of intern students.

**Keywords:** Professional Universities, Kaishi Professional University, Intern students

## **Introduction**

In the late 1990s, the Japanese government recognized the significance of internships as a means to provide students with practical experience and knowledge in the workforce. The Ministries of Education, Labour, and International Trade and Industry collaborated to promote internships, formalizing their agreement in September 1997. This marked an important milestone in the recognition and support of internships in Japan.

The official use of the term "internship" in a government document came in January 1997 through the Program for Educational Reform: Toward the Realization of an "Educated Nation." This document laid the foundation for the subsequent launch of internships in Japan, which gained further momentum with the Action Plan for Economic Structural Reform in May 1997. Fast forward to 2013, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) released a report emphasizing the promotion of internships for educational purposes. The report highlighted the importance of medium- to long-term overseas internships as well as internships with various formats, including those tailored for younger undergraduates and integrated with project-based learning (PBL).

While internships are now widely recognized as valuable for students' preparation for the workplace, their assessment in higher education has gained increased attention from educators and policymakers. Understanding the impact and effectiveness of internships is crucial for evaluating students' growth and ensuring meaningful learning experiences. However, despite the recognition and promotion of internships, the participation ratio in credited internship programs in Japan remains relatively low. A survey conducted by both the public and private sectors revealed that in 2019, only 3% of bachelor students participated in internship programs. Furthermore, the majority of internships lasted less than two weeks, with over 70% falling into this short duration. Around 90% of students were involved in internships for less than one month. Such brief internships provide limited opportunities for meaningful learning and development, making it challenging to assess the growth and impact on students.

In response to this issue, the paper proposes best practices for assessing long-term internships and introduces the concept of a 360-degree evaluation approach. This approach involves gathering feedback from multiple parties involved in the internship process, including supervisors, faculty members, and the students themselves. The paper analyzes questionnaire feedback from all parties to provide insights into effective assessment methods and ensure a comprehensive evaluation of students' internship experiences. By implementing these best practices, it is hoped that internships in Japan can be better evaluated, leading to enhanced learning outcomes and improved preparation of students for the workforce.

## **Framework of Study**

### **Stakeholders of the Internship Program**

The primary stakeholders of an internship program are student interns, faculty advisors (professors) and internship supervisors at the host organization as shown in (Figure 1). Each plays an important role in ensuring that students gain valuable experience and knowledge from their time as interns.

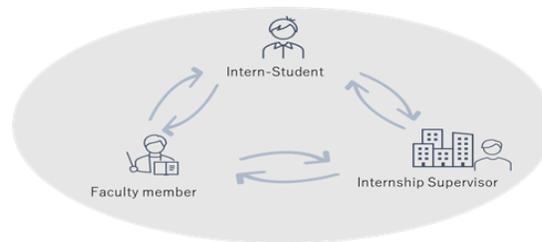


Figure 1. Primary stakeholders of Internship Program.

### **Internship Supervisor**

The internship supervisor is responsible for overseeing the student intern's work experience and providing guidance and support throughout the program. They play a crucial role in facilitating the student's professional growth and development by exposing them to real-world situations, offering constructive feedback, and providing opportunities for hands-on learning and skill development. Additionally, the internship supervisors are responsible for evaluating the student's performance and ensuring that they meet the academic requirements of the internship program.

### **Faculty Member**

The faculty member acts as a liaison between the student, the internship organization, and the academic institution, ensuring that the internship aligns with the student's academic goals and learning objectives. The faculty member also plays a critical role in assessing the student's progress and evaluating their performance, drawing on their expertise in the subject matter and experience in higher education.

### **Student Intern**

The student is the main actor in an internship program and is responsible for actively participating and making the most out of the opportunity. They have to take ownership of their learning experience and show initiative in their tasks and projects. It's also important for the student to communicate effectively with their supervisors and colleagues, ask questions, and seek feedback to continuously improve and meet the objectives of the internship program.

## **Internship Program Structure at Faculty of Information/ Kaishi Professional University**

Faculty of Information/ Kaishi Professional University (KPU) has sent 57 second year and 66 third year students to 45 industry partners as interns in the 2022/2023 academic year. This is the first-round full-scale implementation of the internship program at KPU ("full-scale" means both 2nd and 3rd year students join). Details framework of the whole internship processes is discussed in (Pann et al., 2022). The second-year students participated in an internship of five weeks (150 hours, from late September to the end of October), while the third-year students had fifteen weeks (450 hours, from late September to the end of January). During this period, interns were given a chance to gain valuable knowledge and experience about their chosen field through hands-on experience with real world projects at the leading companies. Interns' work time and their activities had been recorded by themselves every day in an online journal form and verified by their supervisors using a Web-based Daily Reporting System called "Cam-Tore". In addition, faculty members make on-site visits several times during internship and monitor students' working conditions and progress of work. After the completion of the program, students make a summary report of their work and send it to their supervisors. This report may contain confidential information and not disclosed to even faculty members. Students also send a separate report (in 2-page poster presentation format) to faculty members. The latter report does not contain confidential information and can be distributed openly. After the completion of all programs, a one-day long symposium is organized. It was attended by all students, all faculties. All supervisors are invited and almost all host organizations send representatives. 1<sup>st</sup> year students are invited as well to learn about the internship program. Student Interns have to present their poster on this occasion. Finally, faculty members mark a grading to students based on intern student's evaluation, work journal record, findings during on-site visit, and the poster presentation. The yearly time chart is given in (Table 1) below.

Table 1. Yearly Time Chart of the Internship Program at Faculty of Information, KPU

Student	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1 <sup>st</sup> year											Sy	
2 <sup>nd</sup> year		G	G	P	P	PI	I	FQ			Sy	
3 <sup>rd</sup> year		G	G	P	P	PI	I	I	I	I	FQSy	
Supervisor		C	C	C		S	S	S	S	S	QSy	
Faculty member		C	C	C			O	OGr	O	O	QSy	Gr

G: guidance and the following matching process, P: preparatory study for internship, I: internship, F: final report to supervisor, C: consultation and contract between host organization and university, S: supervision of interns, Q: assessment and questionnaire feedback, O: on-site visits of faculty member, Sy: Symposium, Gr: grading by faculty member

### Sector and Size of the Host Organizations

Host organizations offer a diverse range of opportunities in terms of sector and size. Smaller companies can provide interns with an excellent platform to acquire new skills or refine existing ones. On the other hand, larger businesses often offer more extensive opportunities and abundant resources that are highly beneficial for career development. Moreover, host organizations are drawn from various sectors shown in (Table 2), including technology, manufacturing, business consulting, and others, such as finance, healthcare, and hospitality. This diversity allows individuals with a wide range of interests to find their ideal match within their chosen organization.

Table 2. Variety of host organization in sector and size (number of employees)

Sector size	ICT	Manufacturing/ Business Consulting	Others	Total
10,000 ≤	4(system integration, outsourcing)	2 (office equipment)	1(logistic, warehouse)	7
1,000 ≤	3 (Telecommunication, network solution)		1 (Construction management)	4
300 ≤	3 (Application development, IT supports)		2 (media, printing services)	5
100 ≤	13 (IoT services, ERP, Application/website development, research on AI)	6 (hardware manufacturing, job hunting consulting)	10 (health care, food & beverages, education services)	29
Total	23	8	14	45

### Tasks Assigned to Intern Students

The tasks given to intern student's work varies depending on the business nature of a host organization as depicted in (Figure 2). According to the data, interns are mostly involved in internal business activities such as improving existing systems or developing new ones. Business planning development has less content among them.

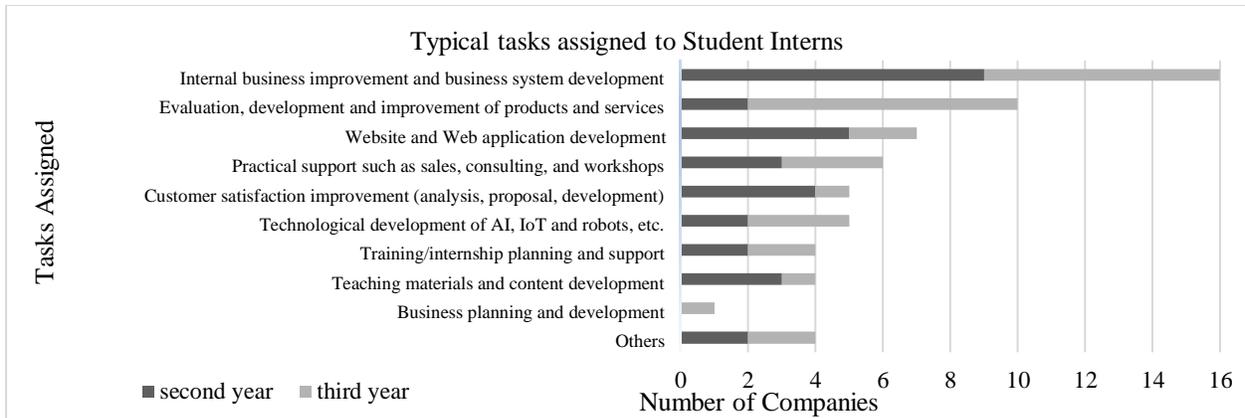


Figure 2. Typical tasks assigned to Student Interns

### 360 Degree Assessment

Diane et al. (2021) proposed a “A 360-degree review” approach. This approach expands assessment beyond the intern’s performance. It proposes to include intern’s assessment of host institutions and faculties, host institution’s assessment of faculties, etc. Such multi-directional assessment might produce useful feedback for each stakeholder of the internship program and thus can contribute to the continuous improvement of the entire internship program. Based on this idea, the authors team, the Steering Committee on Internship Program at FI/KPU created a set of questionnaire forms and collected feedback from all stakeholders, student interns, host organization supervisors and faculty members.

### Questionnaire to Student Interns

The questionnaire to student interns was composed of 33 questions. Questions are grouped in four main categories; Process, Outcome, Growth, and Challenge as described in (Table 3). List of questions is attached in ANNEX 1. In designing the questionnaire, the authors’ team carefully considered objectiveness criteria. The team tried to make questions be answered in an objective manner as much as possible, not just asking respondents’ mental satisfaction level. At least Process and Output groups are concerned, questions include many observable words such as “daily work review”, “regular reporting”, “polite language”, “attendance”, “delay”, “a word of appraisal from the boss”, etc. Regarding Challenge and Growth aspects, as many questions focus on the planning of respondents, i.e., the state of mind of respondents, it is difficult to completely realize objectiveness criteria. This version is the first version and will be elaborated on later. The answer was made according to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). The questionnaire to students is mainly designed to get self-assessment feedback from students, but feedback information can be used also for program evaluation.

Table 3. Questionnaire to student interns for self-assessment (see ANNEX 1 for detail)

Process (10)	Process aspect focuses on “How well did interns learn and be accustomed to the processes and procedures of professional work?” This aspect includes ten questions about daily work review process, regular reporting and consulting procedure, data recording, polite language and attitude, team working style. etc.
Outcome (7)	Outcome focuses on “Whether objectives of intern were met over a predetermined period of time or not”. It includes seven questions about attendance, delay record, observable outputs. Sense of accomplishment, word of appraisal, etc.
Challenge (8)	Challenge focuses on “How well did interns acquire attitude and preparedness to challenges?”. It includes eight questions about clear carrier vision, preparedness, motivation, etc.
Growth (8)	Growth aspect focuses on “To what extent did they develop their working skills by working as an intern?” It includes eight questions about self-evaluation of skills in communication, time-management, problem solving, practice of business manner, cost consciousness, applicability of classroom knowledge to real world problems.

### **Questionnaire to Host Organizations**

The questionnaire to host organizations has fifteen questions. These are divided into three sections. The first section is designed to get feedback from supervisors about the performance and attitude of Student Interns during internships. This section has six questions; skill level, capability to understand problems, changes during interns, task completion level and two work attitude questions (see ANNEX 2), which has corresponding parts in the questionnaire to students. The second section is designed to get feedback to overall assessment of the internship program structure, such as length, timing, the number of interns accepted, effectiveness of online supervision (if applicable). The third section is designed to give feedback to university-side performance. For details, see ANNEX 2.

### **Questionnaire to Faculty Members**

The questionnaire to faculty members is not like ones to students nor to host organizations. At the point of evaluation faculty members have sufficient source data to give the final academic grading to students. Faculty members' source data includes supervisor's assessment feedback, work journal record verified by supervisors, his/her own findings during on-site visits, quality of poster contents and presentation, etc. There is no predetermined calculation formula on how to aggregate these different data to a single grading score. It is completely under the discretion of faculty members. Therefore, the questionnaire to faculty members does not cover student performance evaluation, rather focuses on evaluation of the internship program itself. The questionnaire simply asks "which aspect or achievement of internship program can appeal to society?". Respondents are expected to return descriptive answers to this question.

## **Questionnaire Feedback Results**

### **Self-Assessment of Intern Students**

Four graphs in (Figure 3) present the results of feedback from 2<sup>nd</sup> year students and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students respectively. As shown in (Table 3), four aspects, Process, Outcome, Challenge, and Growth have 7 to 10 questions. Average point for each aspect is calculated and the distribution of average point is shown in histogram. "Process" graph represents how well students learn and are accustomed to the ways and processes of how professionals communicate and work. "Outcome" graph represents to what extent the objective of internship was achieved. "Challenge" graph represents how well interns acquire attitude and preparedness to challenge. "Growth" graph represents the result of challenge, development of various skills, capabilities as a professional.

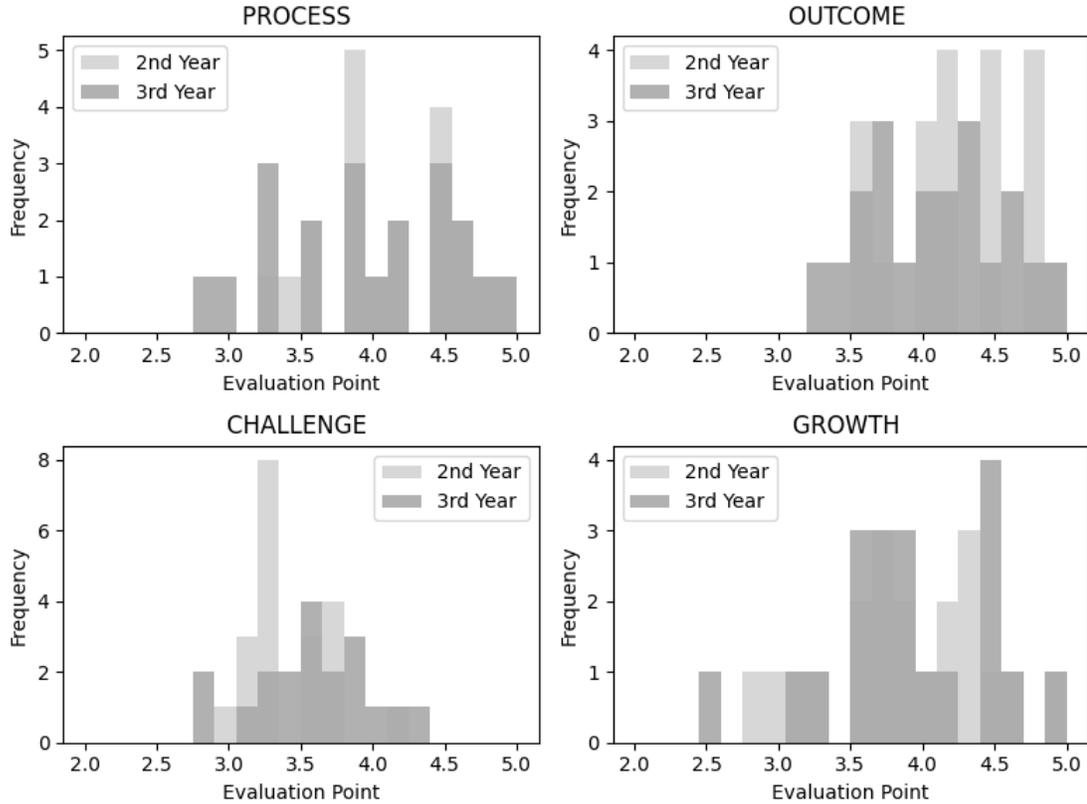


Figure 3. Self-assessment point of intern students

With more experience and exposure to the workplace environment, third-year students face greater challenges and attain better outcomes from their internship programs compared to second-year students, as shown in (Figure 3). This is because of greater maturity, knowledge, and skills they have acquired over time, allowing them to better navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the internship program. As a result, third-year students may have a deeper and more meaningful learning experience during the internship, leading to better outcomes and improved professional development. Additionally, it is noteworthy that second-year students may face more significant challenges during their internships, primarily due to their comparatively limited prior experience in professional settings.

**Student Self-Assessment versus Supervisors’ Assessment**

For the questionnaire results by the host organization to interns, we set -4 to +4 to each answer of six sections, so that the maximum point will be 24 and the lowest point will be -24. This grading system is designed to provide a quantitative assessment metric about the students’ performance across multiple sections.

Figure 4 depicted the evaluation points of the host organization supervisors and the intern’s self-evaluation points. Two questionnaires have a corresponding set of questions, and it can expect similar evaluation scores for these two metrics. The correlation coefficient between two evaluation scores, however, is very small (0.10 for second year, -0.14 for third year students). To gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, further investigation is needed. Authors are conducting a detailed analysis that takes into account factors such as the business nature of the host organization and the specific tasks assigned to interns and plan to elaborate on this supplementary research in an upcoming paper.

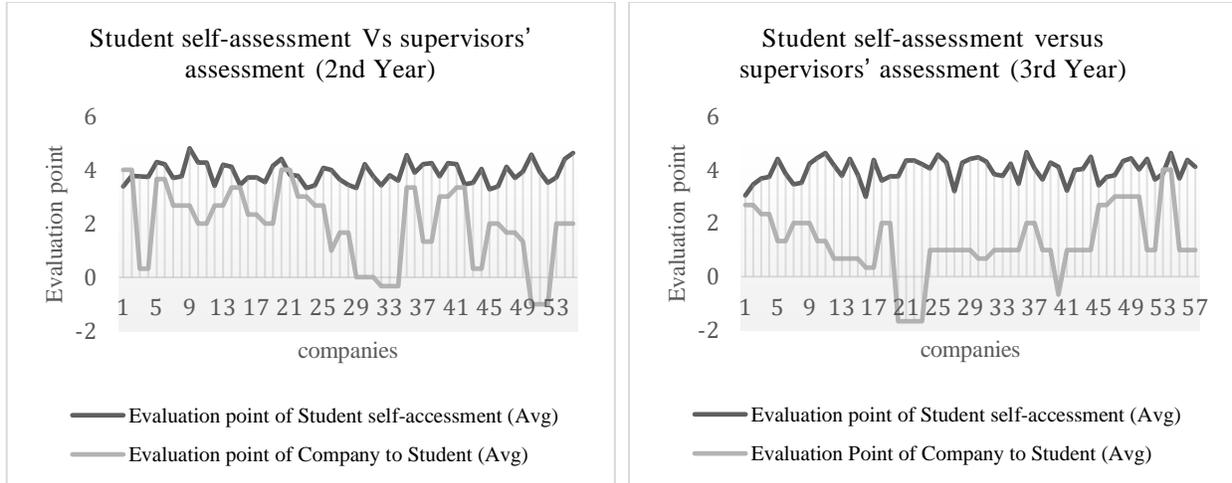


Figure 4. Correlation between supervisors' evaluation and self-evaluation of student

The questionnaire results by the host organization to university side performance showed 100% satisfaction level. It is indicated that they are highly satisfied with the response and communication with the faculty members and staff of the university regarding the internship program.

#### Assessment of Faculty to Interns Students

As described in above, the final assessment of faculty members about student academic score is done by considering various materials; supervisors' feedback, work journal record verified by supervisors, faculty members' own findings during on-site visit, poster presentation, etc. In this evaluation process, fairness is most important.

The journal record includes a short summary of students' daily work and questions from students to supervisor. Working hours are also precisely recorded. Monitoring includes site visits of faculties at least two times for the second-year students and four times for the third-year students during the internship. At the exit point of the internship program, the final presentation by interns attended by relevant staff of the host organization is organized. This occasion is usually not open to outside members. Only responsible faculty members are invited.

From the viewpoint of fairness, the final poster presentations are most important. Presentations are given on the day of the final symposium. Student interns compile the final report to faculty members in A1 size poster of predetermined format. It contains details of tasks, work process, output of work, findings, what is learned, etc. This poster is checked by the supervisor to avoid unintentional release of confidential information. The faculty members can understand many things by viewing posters and discussing with presenters. The poster presentation event also provides a chance of "multiple eyes review". Based on those inputs, responsible faculty members give a final score to students. But as of the date of this paper submission, the student academic score is not finalized.

#### Conclusion

Kaishi Professional University has taken a step forward by successfully sending one-hundred and three students to forty-five different host organizations for internships. This is a major accomplishment that demonstrates our commitment to providing our students with meaningful opportunities to gain hands-on work experience. It is a challenging task to involve the internship for longer periods of time and those at earlier grades in university studies. This study highlights how interns think about the growing of their professional and personal skills by taking part in internships.

#### Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPSS journal belongs to the authors.

## Acknowledgements or Notes

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### ANNEX 1. Questionnaire to student

Aspect	List of questions. Answer by Likert scale,1 – 5.
Process (10); way and process how professionals communicate and work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have experienced <u>a social life outside of the campus</u>.</li> <li>2. I have learned the daily <u>work review/adjustment process</u>.</li> <li>3. I <u>shared my progress everyday</u> with my boss and fellows.</li> <li>4. I <u>was initiated to solve the problem</u>.</li> <li>5. It became a habit to <u>record daily progress of work</u>.</li> <li>6. It became a habit to <u>record and store data properly</u>.</li> <li>7. It became a habit to <u>clarify the points of doubt quickly</u>.</li> <li>8. It became a habit to do <u>regular reporting and consulting</u>, and to keep <u>polite language and attitude</u>.</li> <li>9. I <u>helped fellows</u> when I found them facing difficulty.</li> <li>10. I can talk to senior fellows with little hesitance.</li> </ol>
Outcome (7); tangible output	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Complete attendance</u>.</li> <li>2. <u>No delay in working days</u>.</li> <li>3. I have achieved a <u>convincing and tangible output</u>.</li> <li>4. I got a <u>good episode worth appealing</u> in job-hunting occasions.</li> <li>5. I got a <u>sense of accomplishment and self-conviction</u>.</li> <li>6. I noticed <u>my changes</u> after internship.</li> <li>7. I got a <u>word of appraisal</u> from IS and/or FA.</li> </ol>
Challenge (8); attitude and preparedness to challenge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I got a <u>better understanding about carrier prospect of myself</u></li> <li>2. I got a <u>more concrete idea about what I really want to be</u>.</li> <li>3. I got <u>more concrete idea about aim of workplace and environment</u></li> <li>4. The timing of the internship is <u>too early</u>.</li> <li>5. The timing of the internship is <u>too late</u>.</li> <li>6. I got <u>an idea about ideal internship experience</u>.</li> <li>7. I got <u>motivated by excellent fellow students</u>.</li> <li>8. I <u>motivated fellow students</u>.</li> </ol>
Growth (8); improvement of working skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I felt an improvement in <u>communication skill</u>.</li> <li>2. I felt an improvement in <u>time management skill</u>.</li> <li>3. I felt improvement in <u>problem solving skill</u>.</li> <li>4. I felt improvement in <u>data surveying and analysis skills</u>.</li> <li>5. It became a habit to <u>practice business manners</u>.</li> <li>6. I felt an improvement in <u>cost consciousness</u>.</li> <li>7. I <u>applied classroom knowledge to solve real world problems</u>.</li> <li>8. I <u>helped fellow workers and improved the performance as a team</u>.</li> </ol>

### ANNEX 2 Questionnaire to Host organization

Aspect	Questions
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Intern's performance (6)	Technical Skill Capability to Understand Problems Changes Rate after internship (attitude and skills) Task Achievement Rate Absent Days Delayed Working Time
Program design (4)	Duration of internship Timing of internship Number of interns received Online supervision
University side performance (5)	Overall Performance of University side Overall Performance of Faculty Members What kind of merits did you receive through internship? How many interns can you accept next year? Request for university? (if any)

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