Report of BMS Innovation Project
- Internships investigation-
30-11-2021

Background

Several BMS programmes offer currently internship possibilities. A common problem is that supervisors are not always aware of existing resources, processes, and possibilities to set-up internships. Another challenging factor is that company & institutional assignments could be better facilitated and that especially students find it sometimes challenging to be the driver of their own internship projects.

Report Aim & Setup

The aim of the project, which this report is reflecting, was to see which support resources exist at other universities, give an IBA-based example of how an internship can be set-up and, finally, give an overview of support facilities that exist & next steps. Consequently, the primary goal of this report is to give an overview of approaches and support towards internships for potential internship supervisors.

> **Primary goal:** *Provide a benchmark, practice example of internship execution & an overview of resources available for supporting internships*

The project team consisted of Frederik Vos, Leonie ten Have, and Patrick Bliek. Other colleagues and students were approached for input on an ad-hoc basis. The actual project/research activities took place during 2020/2021. This report serves as an addition to the PowerPoint presentation, which is the other main output of this project.

The next sections will begin with a short benchmarking comparison of different university online resources as compared to the ones of the UT. This is followed by presenting the International Business Administration (IBA) internship module organization, as a practice case example for other internship supervisors. Finally, the report concludes with an overview of resources available right now and projects/resources planned for the future.

1. Benchmarking University Online Resources

Figure 1 - Screenshots of university internship webpages
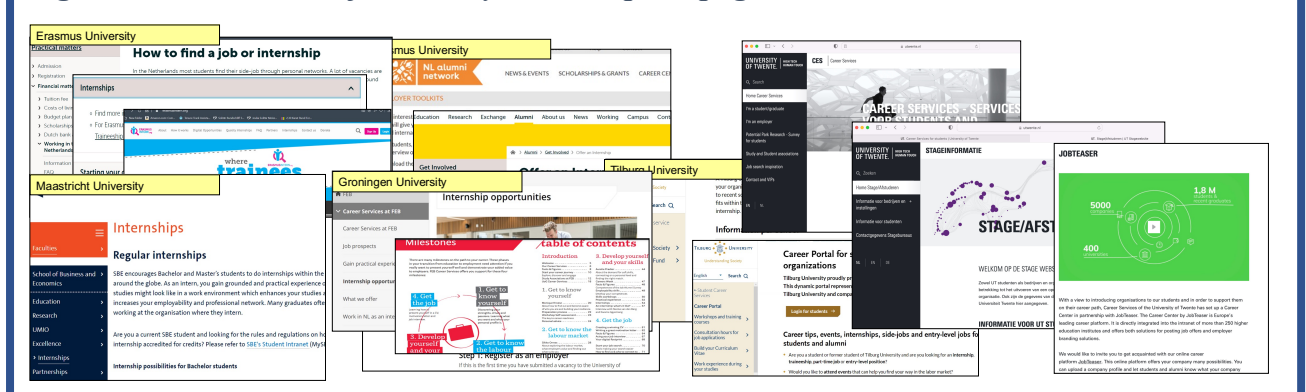
As a first step, several university websites were benchmarked regarding support offered to students, employees and companies regarding internships (see Figure 1). All analyzed universities have information pages on internships, yet many are also quite generic (not really useful). The websites for students range from highly generic to also some providing milestone/guideline overviews. Several universities also distinguish between different forms of internships with separate websites. Employer support via webpages ranges from general info for interested companies up to a standardized possibility to submit internship opportunities. Finally, there is not much focus on employee / supporting staff support in their management of internships on any of the university webpages.

Looking at the UT website, the UT has also dedicated webpages, but these are not always known to teaching staff and students (see the last section of this report for the links to the resources). Especially the "Jobteaser" website, which allows companies to advertise their internship and job opportunities, is not really known among staff of the UT. "Jobteaser" seems not to be dedicated only to the UT, but more like a general advertisement website. Experience shows that arranging a portal for receiving / finding internships remains challenging. The question remains how active / well maintained the offerings of the other universities are and whether the UT should attempt to replicate something like that. Right now, interviews with stakeholders revealed that a decentral approach seems better for the UT at the moment.

Summarized, the website benchmarking shows that support via websites is varying to quite some degree among universities. None seems to offer also help for supervisors. Here, our university is trying to get more support for the teachers. As a consequence, the next section is

supposed to help supervisors by showing a practice example of internship-project execution and the last section of this report shows the support in development.

After this first benchmarking and the conclusion that improvements are possible, the next section continues with a case example of a well-working internship module in the context of the Bachelor of International Business Administration (IBA).

2. Example of Internships in IBA @ Utwente

As an example of how an internship can look like and the different (scientific/practical) aspects to consider, we chose to take the International Business Administration (IBA) internship module (15 EC) as an example case. First, we describe the learning objectives, then, present the general guidelines and specific requirements that are asked of students and companies, and, finally, show the proposal/report setup and grading schemes of IBA internships.

2.1. Learning objectives

The key characteristic of the 15 EC IBA internship module is that self-steering and independence of students is central. The student is managing the project and supervisors are participating as mentors. As shown in Figure 2, students need to find a company, work self-driven on the topic/proposal, arrange paperwork, lead communications, balance stakeholders and, overall, work highly independently. In practice, we often see that especially finding a company and the paperwork

Figure 2 - Overview of activities of IBA internship students

Arrange paperwork

Lead communications

Discover topic & work on proposal

Balance company & university requirements

Student

Find a company

Work on project highly independently

Self-Steering of student is central

surrounding it, are often mentioned by students as areas where they would like to get more support.
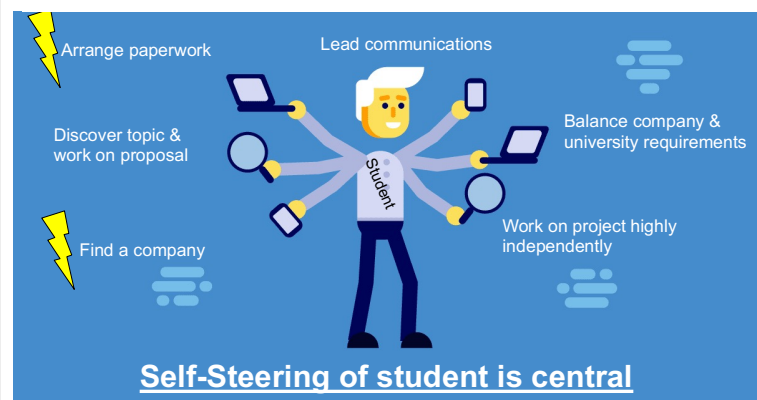
Regarding the learning objectives, the objectives in IBA are not only practice focused, but also lean toward the use of scientific knowledge. Just providing a practical solution is not enough. Key Learning Objectives include:

- Enriching Bachelor's profile with a practical (international) business experience
- Acquires new knowledge & apply literature in practice

- Able to <u>develop solutions & recommendations</u> using the appropriate theories and approaches
- Able to <u>evaluate and reflect</u> on the material(s) used and can justify the report outcomes

In considering the specific set-up of the internship, the company and topic, usually the students' individual educational planning and interests are taken into account. Students have to address a research question (since it is in the context of a Bachelor of Science), which means that they are expected to connect the research question(s) to both theoretical concepts and practice needs, also including a research framework or model in their work.

2.2. Requirements & guidelines

The usual length of the internship is up to 10 weeks, longer stretches (e.g., 6 months) are possible as well, but are very uncommon in the context of the 15 EC module. Students can work individually or in groups, yet mostly they work individually and there is a limit of group size of max. 2 students. Even though the students are required to have already a bit knowledge (need to be 2nd year IBA or later), practice shows that sometimes more extensive screening & training of students is necessary. Many students lack skills and sometimes even (wrongly) expect that the internship module is easier than taking courses, which can lead to frustration. Here, a coordinated expectations management and screening through a coordinated effort by student advisors and supervisors has brought the best results.

Regarding requirement for companies, IBA internships allow for all types of companies and company sizes to be selected, yet it needs to be assured that decent empirical research is possible. Requirements for companies are that they have a dedicated contact person, a physical workspace and preferable a 50/50 work-research allocation. In practice, the 50/50 allocation is often not adequately achieved for the research part, which is especially the case for internships in other countries (especially Germany). Students and supervisors need to make sure that the company leaves enough room for research activities, as otherwise, students often need to work in their spare time and might experience large project delays. Furthermore, the need for a physical workspace remains a challenge in times of Covid-19, digital workspaces might also be an option, but then the question emerges: how to achieve practical experience and allow for enough reflection? For now, IBA requires physical workspaces, but this might be changed in future. In the last section of this report, we provide some resources that discuss the possibility

for digital internships (from teacher and student perspectives), which can serve for you as food for thought on such digital considerations.

Common problems along the internship process (see Figure 3) often relate to a delayed research proposal, which subsequently delays the entire project timeline. As a result, students sometimes do not work well on their data collection / perform is hastily and then fail to get meaningful results. Instead of a clear research model as basis, such internship reports often tend to be

Figure 3 - Example Timeline of Internships
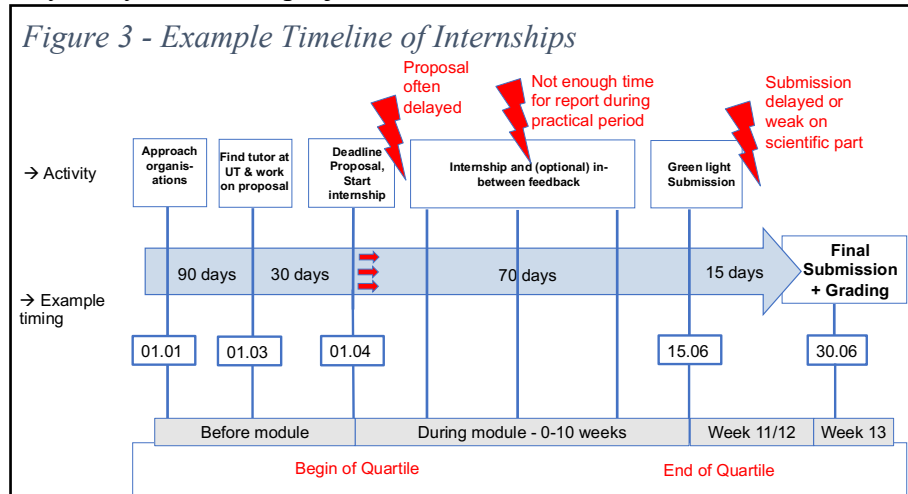
overly shallow practice oriented and are very hard to repair towards the end of the internship module. As a consequence, such internships tend to overrun and also lead to significantly more supervision by the teachers. Hence, creating a proposal and a corresponding research framework/model before the internship starts / or at least in the beginning phase, is one of the biggest success factors to avoid delays and frustration.

2.3. Proposal / Report Setup, Grading & Supervision

The general setup of an internship proposal in IBA is similar to bachelor and master proposals, including an introduction/research question, review, methods and planning. This also explicitly includes in IBA a research model or framework based on literature, which relates to the (practical) question assessed for the internship company.

Next to these generic sections, a special additional section in a proposal for an internship is the 'student expectations section', which is added to the introduction. It is reflecting on individual learning objectives to be achieved in the project. In this part, also background information of host organization (e.g. history, activities, objectives, mission, clients etc) is interwoven with the expectations and learning objectives. For students performing their internship in a foreign country, a special PESTEL analysis of context is added, also stipulating possible relevant country characteristics, which the student needs to take into account during his/her project.

The main/final internship report builds on the proposal. The research model and methods are refined, data is collected and eventually analyses, findings & discussion are added to the report. Here, the final internship report (as opposed to Bachelor and Master report) requires again an extra effort by the students: an additional reflection report is requested for a deeper learning experience. Reflecting & critically looking at the internship experience is the focus here. The reflection also relates to intended learning outcomes & expectations, which the student already included in the proposal version. Additionally, students reflect on the overall process and any special observations they might have made.

Regarding length and layout, the proposal characteristics depend on the supervisor, whereas the final internship report usually is about 20 - 25 pages long (e.g. Arial 11 / spacing 1.5) and the reflection report about 4-5 pages long (excluding Annexes and References).

With respect to grading & evaluation, as shown in Figure 4, grading takes among the usual (like research question, literature review and methods) also theoretical aspects as well as skills and reflection into account. The theoretical evaluation focus here more on decent application of theory and less on new theoretical insights. The final grade is determined by the academic supervisor. The host organization might be contacted for input, but is not necessarily involved in grading. For each project, a second academic supervisor serves as final co-grader for quality assurance. Usually, to communicate the final grade/evaluation, the students are provided with written feedback, which can sometimes also include an (optional) feedback session or an (optional) project presentation.

Figure 4 - IBA internship grading Scheme

Assessment Criteria	≤ 5	6	7	8	9	10
Research question	Unclear	Broad	Clear and specific	Clear, specific and well-defined	Clear, specific, well-defined and original	Excellent and innovative
Literature review & theoretical framework	Unclear and inadequately explained; almost no link with the scientific literature	Limited explanation of the scientific literature	Adequate explanation of the scientific literature; use of (a) conceptual / theoretical framework	Well-explained and somewhat critical description of the literature; use of a clear conceptual framework	Profound and critical evaluation of a very clear conceptual framework	Excellent; Profound and critical evaluation of the literature leading to a very clear conceptual framework
Research method / Design	Unsystematic and confusing; almost no link with the scientific literature	Limited explanation; vaguely justified using the scientific literature	Adequate explanation; appropriately justified using the relevant scientific literature	Well-explained and well-justified using the scientific literature	Profound and critical explanation and evaluation of the research method(s)	Excellent; original & innovative method and demonstration of methodological understanding
Data collection and analysis / Validation of the design	Inadequately described; unclear analysis	Rather limited explanation; clear analysis	Adequate explanation; clear analysis and with prior research	Well-explained; very clear analysis and validation. Results well-presented	Profound demonstration of data collection and analysis; very clear validation	Excellent; application of latest, broad and in-depth analytical techniques, and validation
Conclusions & recommendations / Contribution to theory	Vague	Clear but not based on the reported findings	Conclusions based on the reported findings; appropriate recommendations for future research	Conclusions firmly based on the reported findings; valuable recommendations for future research	Profound conclusions; original recommendations for future research	Excellent; original and innovative contribution to the existing knowledge on the subject
Conclusions & recommendations / Contribution to practice	Vague	Clear but not based on the reported findings	Conclusions based on the reported findings; appropriate recommendations for practice, practical implications	Conclusions clearly articulated and firmly based on the reported findings; valuable recommendations for practice, practical implications	Profound conclusions; original recommendations for practice, practical implications	Excellent; original and innovative recommendations for practice, practical implications
Writing structure and style	Poor; illogical structure	Clear and consistent	Clear and consistent; adequately expressed	Clear and consistent; well-expressed; appropriately argued	Very clear and consistent structure; strong arguments	Excellent; enthused and engages the reader
Independence and professional skills	Dependent on supervisors; poor demonstration of timely & well-prepared communication and other skills	Not so independent; satisfactory demonstration of skills	Semi-independent; good demonstration of skills	Rather independent; very good demonstration of skills	Very independent; superior demonstration of skills	Excellent; superior demonstration of skills
Defending your own points of view (being self-critical, reflect, give arguments)	Scrappy defense / presentation; ambiguous answers	Satisfactory skills	Good demonstration of skills	Very good demonstration of skills; clear demonstration of engagement with the subject	Very good; superior demonstration of engagement with the subject	Excellent; superb demonstration of engagement with the subject

All the aspects described in these sections represent the current application of internships within the IBA internship module (15 EC). It serves as an example and possible inspiration for other supervisors to allow for internships and engage in internship supervision. Feel free to contact the project team (Frederik, Patrick or Leonie) if you have any questions or would like to get access to any material presented here.

The next section continues with an overview of currently available resources and future steps planned to further improve internships and information provision surrounding internships.

3. Important resources & Future Outlook

3.1. Current resources

As a first resource, since beginning 2021, we have a BMS internship and assignment officer, Leonie ten Have. Her key activities are: (1) pro-active support and guidance with regards to internship contracts & documents; (2) to support and enhance the usage of Mobility Online; (3) Offering support regarding practical matters for students, gathered in an internship portal; (5) Extra attention for international students; (6) Strengthening ties with BMS alumni (finding opportunities for both students and alumni to engage in and improve internships). Besides these activities, she is

Leonie ten Have
l.s.tenhave@utwente.nl
internshipcoordinator-bms@utwente.nl

coordinating together with other UT staff efforts to improve processes surrounding internships. You can contact her if you have any suggestions, questions or would like to get into contact with other internship supervisors.

Secondly, next to Leonie as a contact person, there are several online resources currently available at the moment, these include the following webpages:

- General Utwente internship page: https://www.utwente.nl/nl/stage/
- Overview of internship coordinators: https://www.utwente.nl/en/ces/career-services/contact/#internship-coordinators
- Carreer Services Website: https://www.utwente.nl/en/ces/career-services/
- Virtual internship tips:
    - For teachers: https://ccwt.wceruw.org/supporting-virtual-internships-key-tips-for-educational-representatives/
    - For students: https://blog.ccwt.wceruw.org/exploring-virtual-internships-key-tips-for-students/

Next to these webpages, there are also several initiatives ongoing and more are planned in future, these are outlined in the next section.

3.2. Future resources and next steps/projects

Regarding future resources/steps, firstly, as an experiment, Leonie ten Have already created a Canvas site which combines all (practical) recommendations and resources for students willing to do an internship (see Figure 5). This page is currently only available to Communication Sciences (CS) students. The next steps are to expand the information on the experimental Canvas page and make it (if successful) available for all BMS students (international students will be specifically addressed in that page as well)

Figure 5 - Screenshots of experimental info site in Canvas

Secondly, a new project just started to identify the needs for better career preparation for students, which is led by Leonie ten Have and Charlotte Röring. The project called "Advancing Career Preparation within faculty BMS" is investigating how and in what way career preparation within the faculty BMS can be enhanced and improved. Ultimately, it should lead to students being better prepared and equipped for their transition to and first steps in the occupational field. Stakeholders that will be engaged in this project are (international) students, study associations, BMS programme staff (e.g. study advisors), BMS teaching staff, BMS alumni, Companies/organizations in the work field and the Career Service Students. Steps to-be taken in this project include assessments of (I) the current initiatives & processes at BMS & UT-central level regarding career preparation, (II) the wishes of BMS students' regarding preparation (also including alumni views) and (III) the wishes of the occupational field (e.g. of companies, organizations, research institutes). The aim is to identify valuable additions to the current set-up, including e.g. new materials, new programmes and/or new roles/interactions between Career Services Students and other staff/student bodies. In the end, the project will also provide information on how improvements could be best implemented, developed and managed within Faculty BMS. This project is expected to yield first results in 2022.

Finally, in the process of creating this report, the team also collected information from a variety of sources. Especially different viewpoints on the needs of students and staff regarding internship support were collected. It might not be fully comprehensive, but the aspects collected are presented below and serve as a little reflection of what can still be improved and food for thought for future projects:

Staff support needs:
- **Administrative**:
  - Systems / processes:
    - Estimation of potential number of incoming students, possibilities of filtering of students to assure quality
    - Overview of students, company contacts & examinators during internship (based on input from the student)
    - Structured evaluations at the end of internships (student survey)
  - Templates: package for companies, grading or evaluation examples
  - Roles: Clearer overview of roles/tasks/interaction of supervisors, supporting bodies and resources
- **Skills Support**
  - Skills development: Potential for skills-line lectures/resources for students

Student support needs:
- **Before internship:**
  - Practical info (insurances, contracts, etc)
  - Previous student's experience as a sort of info exchange (e.g. mentoring/buddy)
- **During internship:**
  - Minimum of contact points/supervision clarified
  - Clear learning objectives and evaluation criteria

The list presented above is also meant as a motivation for supervisors and staff to start your own projects to improve education. Maybe you have even your own ideas on how to improve internships, which were not mentioned here?

The different aspects mentioned throughout this report are supposed to serve as inspiration and support for colleagues. Please feel free to contact any of the project team members, if you have any questions, recommendations or suggestions!