

Curriculum and Pedagogic bases for integrating practice experiences within higher education

Case study #2: Bachelor of Commerce (Professional) internships

Program focus

The Bachelor of Commerce (Professional) program at Griffith's Logan campus prepares graduates for employment in the accountancy and financial planning fields. Students study full time in the first year of the program and undertake a paid internship with local employers in years 2 and 3 whilst studying part time. These internships range from three to five days per week and are integrated into their three-year degree program.

How practice or workplace experiences are provided

Students apply for the available internships by submitting letters of interest and their CV through an online system, and also indicating their preferences for the positions applied for and industry sector. The students are allocated to their internships, which have been organised by the university staff, on the basis of the fit between the preferences of internship provider and student. University staff develop and maintain contacts with local enterprises, and visit each participating enterprise each year to ascertain how the program is meeting their needs, and those of the interns.

How those experiences are integrated into the overall course curriculum

The integration of students' experiences occurs through a number of means. Students are allocated into 'pods' of first, second and third year students, in which senior students take a lead role, yet also mentored by academic and industry members. These pods provide forums for a range of purposes, including discussions about internships and also reflections upon internships and topics addressed in the Professional Development Program ("PDP"). Each year, students participate in the PDP that progressively develops their readiness to engage in the authentic experiences that comprise their internship. For instance, in the first year the focus is on CV writing, interview skills, working with others etc. In the second year it focuses on how students should conduct themselves within the commerce sector, including sector specific knowledge, and other professional skills. In the third year, these programs focus on issues associated with graduate level employability: engaging with clients, ethics, and building networks. As part of these professional development programs, the students are also engaged in industry forums and breakfast meetings with local businesses, and other opportunities to get to know the requirements of local employers, both large and small.

Particular curriculum practices

The organisation and sequencing of the internships is an inherent component of the overall degree, which also provides a focus for understanding the requirements for professional preparation and engaging in accountancy and financial advisory roles. These internships follow on from a program which seeks to develop the capacities for students to be successful in those internships, and therefore hopefully promote their prospects of moving smoothly into professional practice.

This is an intensive program for students, and also quite demanding for the university in terms of building and maintaining relations with local enterprises within an environment in which paid internships are a rarity. However, participation by these enterprises is solid.

Particular pedagogic practices

The interactions within the 'pods' including access to peer support, mentoring by more experienced students and also by academic staff, and, by extension, industry experts, is a key pedagogic device.

Any evidence

The program is new, but so far well supported by local employers

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