

HONG KONG SHUE YAN UNIVERSITY
Industrial Attachment Office

1. Preparation workshops and pre-internship briefing sessions

To better prepare students for their overseas internship, 12 preparation workshops and 11 pre-internship briefing sessions were organised throughout the project period. The preparation workshops were hosted by representatives of the internship providers outside Hong Kong (e.g. Greater Bay Area, New Zealand) who shared their views on cultural sensitivity and helped students gain insights into life adaptation, intercultural business skills, multicultural communication skills, and international etiquette. As for the briefing sessions, the Industrial Attachment Office introduced work expectations and highlighted potential challenges during industrial attachment abroad, which had attracted over 590 participants from Hong Kong Shue Yan University and other institutions participate. Both activities aimed to enhance students' competence in starting their overseas working experience.

1.1 Evaluation of the preparation workshops and pre-internship briefing sessions

The findings from participants' evaluation showed an overall positive learning experience and quality of the workshops (4.30/5). The students agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were well-organised (4.40/5), interesting (4.26/5), whereas the speakers were well-prepared (4.29/5) and made good use of the allotted time (4.30/5). In terms of the usefulness of the workshops, they agreed that the workshop helped them make sense of the topic, enhance their readiness to take on internship or career overseas. Overall, these workshops were able to increase students' competence in utilizing the knowledge for overseas internship or career planning (4.34/5).

2. Experiential learning activities (ELA)

Three experiential learning activities were conducted in September 2022, February and August 2023 to provide opportunities for students to meet the representative of industrial corporations and gain first-hand information of their offshore business. The first two experiential learning activities were provided by the representatives of internship providers focusing on Mainland China and Australia, while the third one was an eight-day learning tour to New Zealand.

2.1 Evaluation of the ELA

Overall, students rated positively towards the quality of the ELA (4.56/5). Similar to the preparation workshops, they agreed or strongly agreed that the ELA well-designed, well-organised. and interesting. These ELA not only helped them make sense of the topic, but also enhance their readiness and competence in utilizing the knowledge or skills learnt from the ELA in their offshore internship or career planning.

3. Student sharing sessions

Eight student sharing sessions were organised for students to have a better understanding about studying or working overseas, such as working abroad in Shanghai, France and the UK. The speakers were graduates /current students who had studied or worked abroad shared their personal experience and insights from the experience.

3.1 Evaluation of the Student sharing sessions

Despite some variances among the ratings of the sessions, participants in general agreed that the sharing sessions were well-designed, organised and interesting. Additionally, participants agreed that the sharing enhanced their work readiness and perceived competence in utilizing the knowledge learnt from the sharing to their overseas internship or career planning. Overall, these workshops were rated as satisfactory to excellent (mean score = 4.36/5).

4. Industrial Attachment

Throughout the project period, a total of 110 students from the Department of Business Administration (BUS 471 Capstone Project) and the Department of Journalism and Communication (JOUR 403 Professional Internship) working in local agencies with offshore business. Additionally, 11 students from the Department of English Language and Literature, Department of Journalism and Communication, Department of Law and Business, and Department of Social Work had their industrial attachment in Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Canada and the UK. The evaluations of the local internship with offshore business and overseas attachments will be presented separately, starting with the students' feedback and followed by the evaluation from the agencies. (*Note: Students' Feedback was rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating "very disagree" and 5 indicating "very agree"*).

4.1 Students feedback from local internships with offshore business

The overall results showed that the students were satisfied with the industrial attachment (4.05/5). During Phase 2 of the project, the students of the Department of Business Administration agreed or very agreed that it was efficient (mean score = 4.52/5). Most of them agreed that they were given sufficient support from the agency (mean score = 4.48/5). Furthermore, they had sufficient support from the workplace supervisor (mean score = 4.52/5) and from the Industrial Attachment coordinator (mean score = 4.32/5). Similar results were also shown to another cohort of students during Phase 4 of the project. Students rated that they were given adequate support from both agency (4.23/5) and attachment coordinator (4.15/5). Although some variations were observed in the students' feedback from the Department of Journalism and Communication, students generally agreed that they were given adequate support from the agency and workplace supervisor (4.12/5), whereas the support from the attachment coordinator was adequate (3.87/5) across different phases of the project.

In terms of the enhancement in transferable competency and skills, students from the Department of Business Administration rated very highly for all items (4.84/5) during Phase 2. The areas with the greatest improvements were the sense of responsibility, time management, organization and planning skills (all means = 4.92/5), followed by working independently, problem-solving ability and presentation skills (all means = 4.88/5). The scores for 2022-23 cohort (Phase 4) were lower, nevertheless, the students agreed to strongly agreed that there were enhancements in the transferable competency and skills (4.17/5) with the highest improvement in the competence in working independently. Similarly, most students from the Department of Journalism and Communication agreed to very agreed that their transferable competency and skills have been improved after the internship. During phase 2 of the projects, students rated more improvements in crisis management, organization and planning skills (4.47/5), and a higher capacity to deal with challenging tasks and work independently (4.41/5). The students who took their internship during Phase 4 of the project agreed with the enhancement in the transferable skills, such as sense of responsibility (4.02/5) and working independently (3.92/5), the improvements seemed to be lower (average all items = 3.75/5).

The improvements in global competence and cultural sensitivity were lower in Phase 2 (3.75/5) than Phase 4 (4.13/5) for students of the Department of Business Administration. After participated in the internship with offshore business, the students were more open to understand, respect, and appreciate people other than my own culture (4.45/5) and they felt more comfortable to work with people from different cultural backgrounds (4.19/5). The students from Journalism and Communication seemed to be more neutral about the impact of

internship on their changes in global competence and cultural sensitivity across cohorts. For instance, they tended to agree the internship has helped them to be more open to understand and respect others of different cultures (3.62/5), and their employability would also be enhanced (3.77/5).

Overall, the students of the two Departments were neutral to very agreed that the internship experiences at agencies with offshore business had increased their cultural sensitivity and ability to apply their knowledge in the workplace. They agreed that their global competency has been increased and would have a positive impact on their employability.

4.2 Students feedback from offshore internships

The students from different Departments rated positively for their offshore internship experience (4.32/5), with the highest from the Department of English Language and Literature (4.67/5).

Despite the relatively lower ratings in the efficiency of the recruitment procedure (3.5/5), adequate support from the workplace supervisors (3.88/5) and industrial attachment coordinator (3.83/5), it is worth noting that the students perceived their offshore internship experiences has enhanced their transferrable competence and skills, global competence and cultural sensitivity, and overall outcomes from the internship.

Among the various transferrable competence and skills, the students found that their presentation skills for expressing personal views, collaboration, and discussions with people from different cultural backgrounds has been improved (all means = 4.50/5). In addition, students also expressed that they had improved sense of responsibility, time management, problem-solving ability, dealing with challenging tasks, crisis management. Similar impact was also found in global competence. Moreover, the offshore internship experiences also helped students be more aware of the cultural differences in the interaction and more comfortable to work with people from different cultural backgrounds (both means = 4.50/5). Enhancements in other aspects, such as more open and respectful attitude, paying more attention to global and international events were also noted among the students. Lastly, the students also found that their work-related global competence (4.46/5) and cultural sensitivity in workplace (4.46/5) has been enhanced, which would improve their employability (4.50/5).

4.3 Evaluation by Workplace Supervisors (agencies with offshore business)

As Department of Business Administration and Department of Journalism and Communication used different indicators to evaluate students' performance, the overall mean score was calculated and presented separately.

The performance of Business Administration was rated by agencies in five domains: Competency & productivity, administrative competence, work attitude, other skills and overall rating. In both phases, students received mean scores of above 4 in most domains and sub-items, indicating good to excellent performance. During phase 2, agencies rated outstanding performance in cooperativeness (mean score = 4.73/5), punctuality (mean score = 4.73/5), achievement of overall objectives (mean score = 4.50/5), followed by administrative procedures, computer knowledge and application, and interpersonal skills (all mean scores = 4.45/5). Students in phase 4 also had better overall rating and showed good performance in proficiency in Chinese(4.56/5), cooperativeness (mean score = 4.48/5), sense of responsibility (4.44/5), interpersonal skills (4.42/5).

The performance of Journalism and Communication students was evaluated in terms of 8 qualities (on a scale of 1-10): quality of work, analytical ability, ability of expression, creativity, responsibility, punctuality, self-initiative, and collaboration. The overall performance rated by workplace supervisors of both phases were above 8/10, which are equivalent to grades B+ to A-. The top three areas were responsibilities (phase 2 = 9.08, phase 4 = 9.00), collaboration (8.92 and 9.18) and punctuality (9.17 and 8.88).

4.4 Evaluation by Workplace Supervisors (offshore internships)

In general, the performance of students in these internships were rated as "good". As Department of Business Administration and Department of Journalism and Communication used different indicators to evaluate students' performance, the overall mean score was calculated and presented separately.

The student from the Department of English Language and Literature attached to YMCA in Taichung and the agency rated the performance as “very good” (scores 4/4) for all domains, such as attitude, sense of responsibility, teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills. As for the student from the Department of Journalism and Communication, she had very good performance in creativity and collaboration (A grade) with an overall good performance (B grade). The overall performance of student from the Department of Law and Business was rated as good, with very good attitude, behaviour and sense of responsibility. Lastly, 8 students from the Department of Social Work participated in offshore internships. They performed well in terms of their professional values and reflection, administrative knowledge and skills, problem-solving and critical thinking, as well as professional competence (80.08/100)

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The workshops, experiential learning activities and sharing sessions were well-organised and interesting. The students found them helpful in preparing students for their internship and sensitivity to working with people of different cultural backgrounds.

The arrangements of student internships throughout the project periods were impacted enormously by the covid-19 pandemic. Students who participated local internships at agencies with offshore business reported that they had gained competence in transferable skills, such as working independently, organization and planning skills, and dealing with challenging tasks, nevertheless, they reported a lower level of increase in global competence and in cultural sensitivity were reported. These internships did not provide experiences in working with people of different backgrounds or in other cultural contexts, which were not sufficient to induce a positive change in students’ global competence.

On the other hand, students who participated offshore internships reported not only improvements in sense of responsibility, time management, problem solving skills, but also enhancements in their awareness of cultural differences in interacting and working with people from other cultural backgrounds. Through these offshore exposures, students developed an open attitude to embrace different cultures. From the students’ feedback, the support from industrial coordinator, agency and workplace supervisor needs to be strengthened in future offshore internships.