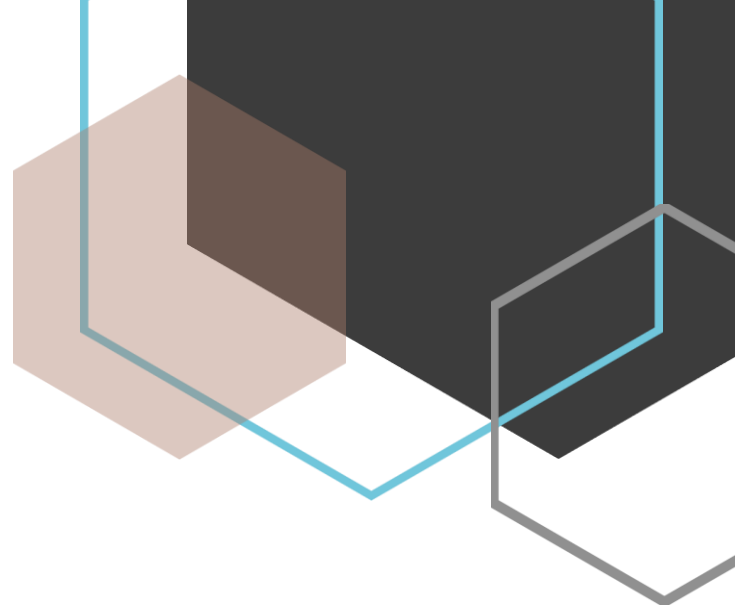




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PROPOSAL FOR REVIEW OF INTERNSHIP AND PLACEMENT SCHEME FRAMEWORK

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY UNIVERSITY, NEPAL

Integrating Talent Development into Innovation Ecosystems in Higher Education

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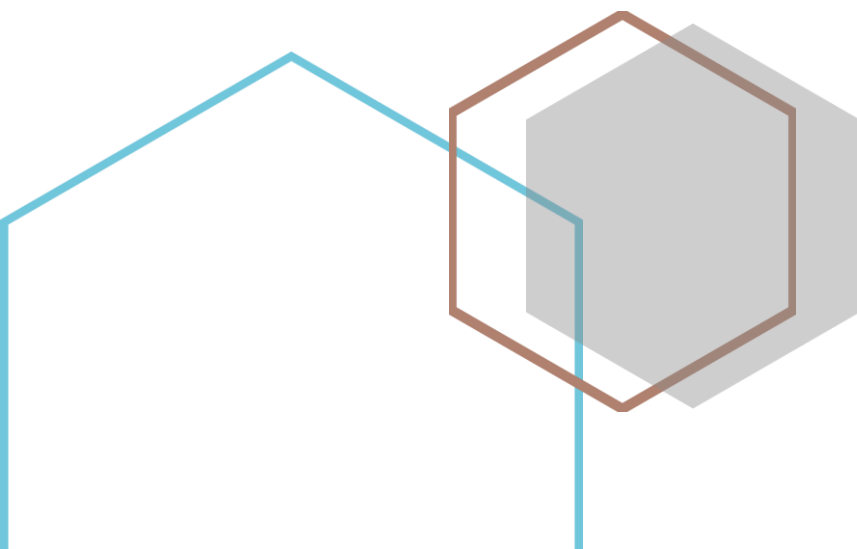




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The framework review proposal outlines the current University policy and practice regarding student internships and placements and makes proposals for improvements.

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DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT POLICY

Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) has integrated internships in the curriculum of the four-year bachelor programs in Agriculture, Veterinary, Forestry and Fishery. Compulsory placement is carried out in the 4th year (8th semester) of their Bachelor program. Students of the Agriculture and Fishery Faculties join government programs like Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Program for sixth-month-long internship. Similarly, students of Veterinary Faculty do their internships in government veterinary hospitals and extension organizations. Students of Forestry Faculty join forest offices and community-based Forest Management Groups for their internship. AFU has also started to send students for internship in different INGOs (like KOICA) and in private firms upon availability of offers with funding.

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROCESS

The Dean's offices of the respective faculties are responsible for the compulsory placement of students in the respective programs.

PREPARATION OF THE STUDENTS FOR INTERNSHIPS

AFU encourages students to get involved in extracurricular activities, social work, voluntary support, etc. Students are engaged in field campaigns like vaccination, rabies control, plant clinics, epidemic control, soil testing, earthquake recovery, recovery from floods, livestock health checking, plant nutrient analysis, seed production plot observation, etc. These activities are being conducted under the guidance of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, the Directorate of Research and Extension, Department of Extension and Rural sociology, Department of Soil Science and Engineering, Agriculture Science Center and different voluntary organizations of the students. The University is providing technical and financial assistance for these activities. All of these activities are helping to equip students with skills for successfully carrying out internship. Voluntary students' organizations carry out different trainings like proposal writing, business plan preparation, data analysis, report writing, technical writing, etc., which also contributes to internship preparation. AFU has signed Memoranda of Understanding with about 50 national and international organizations, which has opened the door for faculty and student exchange for practical trainings and internships. More than 20 students have visited Japan, Thailand, China, and Korea to attend short-term trainings. This type of support can be strengthened in the future.

PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF INTERNSHIPS / PLACEMENTS

The central office of the University and the respective Dean's offices are responsible for carrying out monitoring and quality control of internship programs. The Dean's office allots a Chief Advisor and one Member Advisor for each student to monitor the student's work and to guide him/her in intermediate stages. This work includes monitoring work while the student is engaged in internship. At the end of the internship, evaluation reports are issued using an external evaluator.



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THE STUDENT HAS
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THE INTERNSHIP /
PLACEMENT**

**POSSIBILITY FOR
ENGAGING IN
INTERNSHIPS /
PLACEMENTS IN THE
NON-PROFIT AND
PUBLIC SECTOR**

**GAPS, WEAK POINTS
AND INEFFICIENCIES
OF THE INTERNSHIP
POLICIES AT THE
UNIVERSITY**

Every student who does an internship is required to produce an internship report and evaluation report from the employer. Internship carries certain credit hours (usually 15) in the academic system of AFU and thus students must defend their report in the presence of external evaluator. About 20% of the total mark is also allotted to site supervisor/employer for marking students' performance in the field.

AFU has a system in place to partially monitor and assess the skills and competencies that the student has developed during the internship/placement. Students must share different midterm reports to their major advisor about their progress, reflecting on new skills developed and the understanding of the field in which they work. The major advisor suggests necessary corrections. Besides this, the major advisor must visit the intern at least once in the six-month period of the internship to support, monitor and collect feedback.

Most students are doing their internships programs in governmental offices. The selection of organizations does not depend on the interest of student; rather it depends on the organizations with which the University has a bilateral agreement for such services. Students obtain minimum logistic support from such organizations, covering their meals, room rents and stationeries.

Creating more opportunities for internships

AFU is recent in its establishment. As departments and faculties are expanding and student numbers are rising, AFU is now facing the challenge to increase the new sources of funding and the number of organizations with which the University cooperates. In parallel, it is necessary to increase the number and range of donors for supporting internship programs. Students of AFU cannot sustain unpaid internships and should be supported with minimum living allowance during the internship period.

Planning

There seems to be a gap in planning that prevents AFU from sending students for internships and training in a diverse range of organizations and programs. For reducing this gap, AFU can organize fairs and develop and sign bilateral agreements with private sector and business companies.

Preparation of students

There do not seem to be identifiable gaps in preparing students for internships, although some departments like Department of Agriculture Economics and Agribusiness Management can focus a bit more on developing skills relevant to the profession.

Monitoring of quality



The university has been adopting a well-defined system of monitoring and evaluation. However, the process will be improved if the frequency of monitoring visits and monitoring through online portal/tracking, etc. is increased.

Diversification of internship opportunities

As stated earlier, the University is striving to diversify the available internship opportunities in terms of ranges of sectors and types of organizations by establishing contacts and collaborations with various sectors across the nation. New target types of sectors and organizations include larger private farms, governmental farms, processing industries, marketing companies, export-import organizations, slaughter houses, development organizations, INGOS, NGOS, CBOs, cooperatives, private veterinary clinics, etc.

Improving the process of establishing contacts with business, public sector and the non-profit sector in view of creating opportunities for students to get engaged in placements and internships

The University can do the following to establish contacts with different stakeholders for creating opportunities for student internships:

- Involvement of private and public sector and non-profit organizations in different bodies of the university
- Involvement of these stakeholders in curriculum reform and update
- Annual fair of stakeholders at the university premises
- Increased bilateral collaboration with individual organizations
- Top university authorities lobbying possible stakeholders for stronger involvement
- Teaching the staff of organizations who provide placements or internship for students against a subsidized fee
- Designing and implementing collaborative projects with stakeholders who provide placements or internship for students
- Establishing own fund for a percentage of students with competitive proposals.

Improving the process of planning internships/placements: Implementation of Training Needs Assessment (TNA)

Students should be invited to submit proposals for internship work one semester in advance of their placement. Placement providing organizations should be encouraged to select the students based on their need and the quality/creativity of the proposal. Besides this, planning should allocate certain budget for supporting students who do not get access to any organization due to mismatch of the interest of the student

and the offer from the side of placement providing organizations. The University can also approve internships in its own farms like Agronomy Farm, Horticulture Farm, Fishery Farm, Livestock farm, Veterinary Teaching Hospitals, etc. This will be more relevant in the near future at Faculty of Agriculture where the yearly intake of student has risen to about thousand in 2020.

Improving the process of preparation of students for internships/placement

The following approaches could be adopted for enhancing the preparation of students in internships:

- Strengthening the practical skills of students
- Encouraging the generation of innovative ideas by students
- Continuous update of curriculum to reflect the needs of business
- Engaging students in summer and winter campaign in collaboration with similar service providing organizations
- Supporting undergraduate students to carry out small-scale research activities in collaboration with master and PhD level students
- Organization of tours and other exposure visits
- Strengthening of the University's own farms.

Strengthening the monitoring process in order to ensure the quality of internships/placements

The university should increase the monitoring frequency and the efficiency of monitoring. A separate wing can be established at each Dean's office for monitoring of placements and establishing collaboration with placement providing organizations. The use of online portal could be strengthened for monitoring and tracking students' performance.

Improving the procedures for monitoring and assessment of the skills and competencies that the students acquire during internships/placements

The University has been planning to widen the collaboration with placement providing organizations, especially with private agribusiness firms. Nepal has a shortage of agriculture technicians and thus the Government has possibility of using graduates for On-the-Job-Training. AFU has started an online portal for monitoring the performance of students but in the next few years it should increase its role based on feedback from intern students and employees. The inclusion of a skills test during the final external evaluation would bring significant advantages and should be the preferred option. Evaluating more research works done within the academic system will not bring significant added value.

Expanding the possibilities of internships/placements in the non-



profit and public sectors

The numbers of colleges and universities offering agriculture and veterinary education have been rapidly increasing in Nepal in recent years. This has increased the competition for the available placements and internships. The main organizations for placements and internships until now are the non-profit organizations and the public sectors. Therefore, the priority should now be to work on creating more links with private business firms.

