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PROPOSAL FOR REVIEW OF INTERNSHIP AND PLACEMENT SCHEME FRAMEWORK

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS, INDIA

Integrating Talent Development into Innovation Ecosystems in Higher Education

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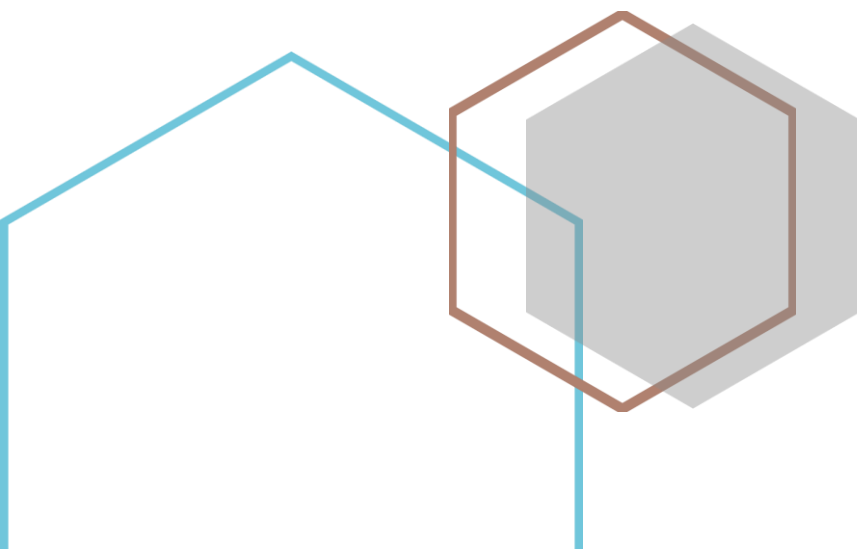




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The framework review proposal outlines the current University policy and practice regarding student internships and placements and makes proposals for improvements.



**DESCRIPTION OF
CURRENT POLICY**

Internship is mandatory in all the post-graduate programmes of the University of Madras. An internship carries two credits for two-year P.G. Programmes and three credits for three year P.G. Programmes such as M.C.A. Usually, students are encouraged to go for internship during the summer vacation at the end of the first year for a minimum of four weeks. The organisation where they will carry out the internship is chosen by them in consultation with the faculty advisor/Head of the Department. Once the student decides on an organisation, he/she puts forward the request and the Head of the Department forwards it to the concerned organisation. Upon their acceptance, their dates of the internship are decided based on mutual agreement. Students can do internships with or without monetary assistance. Students are encouraged to work in areas in which they can do their Master's thesis or where they can apply for a job later.

**PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT OF THE
PROCESS**

Placement activities are undertaken by the University Students Advisory Bureau (USAB). The Department of Management Studies has its own Placement Coordinator and conducts placement fairs every year. In the previous years, companies like Wipro Technologies, Cognizant Technologies, ITC Limited, HCL Technologies Limited, Tata Consultancy Services Limited, Advinus Therapeutics Limited, Agility Global Integrated Logistics, Future Technologies Private Limited and Life Insurance Corporation of India, Indian Air Force, Everonn Education Limited, Royal Sundaram Alliance General Insurance and HDFC Bank participated in the placement drive in the University. The number of students who have found jobs during campus placements has been increasing in the University.

The University has introduced the requirement for students to take four mandatory Soft Skill Courses amounting to eight credits for P.G. students in order to make them ready for the workplace.

The following Soft Skills courses are offered:

- Language and Communication Skills
- Computation Skills
- Gender Sensitization and Workplace Readiness
- Personality Development.
- Writing a Research Article
- Professional Skills for Psychologist
- Psychology for Effective Living
- Communicative English
- Writing Skill in Research Proposal and Report Writing
- Live Skills, Education and Management Skills
- Basic Managerial Skills
- Business Communication Skills



PREPARATION OF THE STUDENTS FOR INTERSHIPS

THERE PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF INTERSHIPS/PLACEMENTS

COLLECTING FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS AND EMPLOYERS REGARDING THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERSHIPS

PROCEDURES IN PLACE FOR MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES THAT THE STUDENT HAS DEVELOPED DURING THE INTERSHIP / PLACEMENT

- Essential Spoken and Presentation Skills in English
- Scientific Writing, Disability and Challenge
- Academic Writing and Research Skills

The internship activities are planned by the Faculty and Heads of the concerned departments in consultation with the students. Placements are planned by the Director, USAB as well as the Placement Coordinator, Department of Management Studies.

Students are introduced to the nature and scope of internship activities by the concerned Faculty Advisor. Quite often, the Department maintains a roster of potential organisations to whom the students can communicate. Senior students also help the Junior students to prepare for their internship. The USAB conducts sessions for students on job requirements such as preparation of resume, facing interview, etc.

The students submit a 25-30 pages report on the internship experience along with the attendance certificate from the Head of the Internship organisation as well as a daily log of activities. Students make a presentation and also defend their report as a class seminar.

Routine checks are made in terms of communicating with the person in charge of the student during his/her internship and by a thorough evaluation of the report submitted by the student. Student feedback is received on issues faced during the internship and if the organisation's mechanism is found to be faulty, the same is communicated to them.

Students are encouraged to provide feedback on the placement if the organisation has gone back on its promise in terms of salary agreed and other service conditions. The USAB takes it up with the concerned organisation.

Informal feedback is collected from students and employers even during the internship. Course correction, if needed, is undertaken at this level.

Students are asked to keep daily logs of work during the internship. This provides a continuous monitoring mechanism. The assessment is done mainly on the basis of the written report submitted along with the presentation on the internship and its relevance to the course of study.

However, there is no uniform assessment framework across the institution to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship training.



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

Students of Social Sciences and Humanities frequently choose the non-profit sectors especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Students of Social Sciences are also encouraged to undertake field-based internship in order to gain first-hand experience of the field. Though not extensive, students often work in public sector organisations for their internship. For instance, students from Anthropology and Women's Studies as well as Ancient History and Archaeology, undertake internships in public-funded tribal research centres and archival sites. Thus, internships in the non-profit sector are not only encouraged but have also proven to be effective in producing possible research topics. Even though Business and Management disciplines typically chose to work with corporate companies and multinational organisations, there is an emerging trend for students, to focus the internship on non-profit work, e.g. in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wings of corporations. Thanks to the CSR becoming mandatory according to Companies Act 2013, the CSR activities of MNC's and large organisations are undertaken in conjunction with NGOs and Self Help Groups (SHGs). CSR also provides a career choice for students in terms of their placements. This is emerging as a choice for M.Com and MBA students.

**POSSIBLE
IMPROVEMENTS IN
INTERNSHIP POLICIES**

Creating more opportunities for internships

- A University-wide database can be developed and maintained in order to improve the contacts with different institutions and thus promote placements and internships.
- It is necessary to obtain structured feedback from employers and internship organisations in order to better prepare and train the students.
- The University Industry Community Interaction Centre (UICIC) in the university may be used as a mechanism for establishing more contacts with business. At present, the Boards of Studies in all subjects includes one expert from the industry. The industrial experts may be invited in other academic forum in order to establish and maintain contacts.

Planning

- As of now, every Department plans its own schedule for internships. This can be made into a school-wide exercise.
- As far as placements are concerned, there is a university-wide Job Fair. Efforts may be taken to collaborate with other agencies to conduct additional job fairs in order to maximise the placement and job opportunities for students.

Preparation of students

- At present, students are advised on internships and placement by the faculty advisor and the faculty members in the Departments concerned. The office of the Dean of Students and the USAB can collaborate to provide professional training sessions especially for



placements.

- The mandatory presentation of the internship experience may be included in the assessment of students.
- More senior students who have already obtained placements can be invited to share with the junior students their experience and preparation methods. This will work as a platform for peer-to-peer learning.
- Methodical documentation and update of information regarding past internships and placements is required.

Monitoring of quality

Since all internships are part of the curriculum, there is a well-defined process in evaluating their outcomes. However, the same is currently not done for placements because students become alumni. The USAB can monitor the successful integration of students into their work spots.

Monitoring of developed skills and competencies

The organisations providing internships are chosen based on the primary area of study of the particular student. Reports submitted by students are evaluated to understand the skills and competencies gained. The process of evaluation, however, can be centralised in order to ensure transparency and uniformity.

The University has already introduced Soft Skills as mandatory courses based on the inputs received from placement agencies about the need for improvement in communication and other soft skill requirements. The list of offered Soft Skill courses needs to be expanded based on the changing requirements on the labor market.

Diversification of internship opportunities

The University of Madras already encourages students to do internships in the non-profit and private sector organisations. However, the choice of institution is ultimately the decision of the students. Further, public sector organisations have their own well-defined recruitment procedures which will not allow a direct placement activity through job fairs

The choice of institution for internship and placement is also informed by the core discipline of students, which determines the type of organisation they enter into.

The INNOTAL partners have proposed the following possible improvements for consideration by University of Madras:

Developing a more uniform approach could be supported by the development of Internship Program Manual and Rules, which students should be required to study with before the internship and observe during the internship. This would ensure higher quality of the internship experience and would help students recognize and report unsatisfactory experiences.

CV and portfolio development sessions can be organized for students. During these sessions, career advisors should help students develop

successful CVs/portfolios that could be used to match them with internship providers.

Preparatory training for the students specifically for internships and placements can be organized, including the following topics:

- Using social networks and social capital for career growth
- Creating and maintaining a LinkedIn profile
- Maintaining presentable and decent social media profiles (Facebook, etc.)
- Email correspondence etiquette
- Preparation for interviews.

The university can further strengthen the monitoring process of internships and placements. More focused approach could be developed for involving industry supervisors in the assessment of the skills and competencies developed.

Madras University could also consider the suggestion jointly developed by the INNOTAL partners to introduce as best practice the signing of an Internship Agreement between the student, the University and the internship provider. The agreement should specify in advance the learning goals that the internship should achieve. It could serve as a form of a contract between the parties involved and can streamline both implementation and monitoring.

The University can consider a more extensive promotion of internships/placements in the non-profit and public sectors among the students studying management-related disciplines.