

What is an internship?

An **internship or work placement** is an important opportunity to gain working experience in a particular career area. There are generally two types of internship that are available, namely:

- Internships done while still studying in university, paid or unpaid;
- Internships done after graduating from university before securing a job/career, paid or unpaid.

For the purpose of this article, we will be focusing on the first type - internship while still studying in university. Most of us enter university with the intention of narrowing down our scope of interests which will hopefully bring us closer to what we want to pursue career-wise.

It is true that the knowledge you learn from courses taken within the degree/postgraduate programmes in university can help prepare for a future career in a specific field. However, the impact is not as lasting and as strong as learning from experience.

1. UBD Discovery Year

As part of the UBD Experience, students enrolled in the GenNext Programme are given the opportunity to fully explore their potential in a hands-on and accountable manner while at the same time undergoing thorough and rigorous training in the fields of their choice.

In order to have such well-rounded graduates, it is mandatory for 3rd year students in the 4-year programme to undergo the Discovery Year in which they must leave the university to pursue 1 or 2 of the following activities:

- Study Abroad Programme (SAP) - studying for 1 or 2 semesters abroad at partner or non-partner universities;
- Internship (INT) with appropriate companies or agencies - carrying out internships in government departments, private companies, or international organisations;
- Community Outreach Programme (COP) - doing a project which helps people families in unfortunate communities, locally and abroad;
- Innovation and Incubation Project - creating start-up and innovation enterprises.

Under internship, students will spend their DY working full time for at least 32 hours per week for 14 weeks in a company, organisation or government agency within or outside Brunei Darussalam.

During this internship period, the student will be expected to develop work skills, leadership qualities, team work and a suite of soft skills appropriate to the global workplace.

In a typical internship, you will “shadow” the host through a typical day’s activities which might include meetings, informational discussions with various divisions, tours of the organisation, general observation of business proceedings and potentially the opportunity to work on a project. This provides a greater understanding about a particular organisation, in addition to meeting alumni and recruiters at the organisation.

2. Benefits of doing Internship

By opting to do internship, students will be able to gain experiences and opportunities which will help with your transition from student to graduate such as:

- Exposure to the working world/environment;
- Knowledge of the skills/traits that are currently sought after by employers/recruiters;
- Development and enhancement of new or existing skill sets;
- Building new career and social networks and strengthening of the existing ones.

Doing an internship is a way to try out a new job or career without making a permanent commitment. Testing the waters by doing an internship may open doors and could lead to a new career that’s satisfying and rewarding.

Just to give you an example, we had the opportunity to get to know one student who chose to do internship in the finance industry. She is from a science background and was really interested to find out if the path she is currently on is what she truly wants to pursue or otherwise.

When she came across the internship advertisement, she decided to apply for it and was selected for the position. While she was at the company, she learned about finance and marketing. At the end of it, she realized that she enjoyed the work and would like to pursue this field further after she graduates.

3. Getting started

3.1 Discover yourself

For most, trying to get to know oneself well is a very difficult process, one that involves reflecting frequently on your skills and flaws as well as the lessons from your past experiences. Auditing yourself in such a way can reveal things which can be hard to accept but it is necessary in order to achieve personal growth and discover the best way you can contribute to society.

To recap, make sure to set aside time, at least half an hour each day, to unearth the following about yourself:

- **Your personality - preferences, temperaments, etc.;**
- **Your skills - what is it that you are good at;**
- **Your interests - matters that get you enthusiastic and you are passionate about;**
- **Your values - principles that you hold dearly to on all or most things in your life.**

Suggestions:

- Start out by taking the online assessments or take our personality profiling tests
- Work with UBD CoNECT to discuss your online assessments results, identifying your skills, interests, and values.

3.2 Career Research and Exploration

This is where the extra work comes in, where you dig deep to discover your niche and plan the necessary steps to develop and achieve your career goals. You can do this by:

- reflecting on experiences you have acquired;
- developing strategies via mind maps or any other ways you are comfortable with and setting short-term and long-term goals;
- doing research on internships;
- joining in-campus clubs, volunteer works and other social groups; and
- identifying what's needed in your nation/community and ways on how you can contribute to be a part of the solution.

Setting aside time in your daily schedule to do this will open up many interesting options for you to consider and learn more about.

For example, with regards to research, today's advancements have given you access to research for information faster and across various platforms that you can basically do this on your bed before you retire for the day!

Suggestions:

- Approach us or your respective DY coordinators for any options available and especially for UBD alumni, you also have the option to talk with the Office of Alumni Relations & Advancement (OARA).

- Find out and do more skills enhancing activities such as volunteer works, internships, and extracurricular activities (ECAs) that appeals to your interests.
- Build your professional network on LinkedIn.
- Look out for and attend career talks and workshops to learn how to fully utilize online professional networks such as LinkedIn, interact with and gain insights from alumni in different fields and the options available for you out there.

3.3 Application

After all that preparation, you are ready to send out your applications. Prior to applying, you need to ensure that you are sending out quality CV/resume as well as cover letter so as to increase their interest to know more by calling you for an interview.

It is important to note that each individual will encounter different paths and results. Refrain from comparing yourself to others and when selecting which internship is currently best for you, keep in mind to approach it positively and doing your absolute best at it.

Suggestions:

- Seek the advice of your faculty's DY coordinator of the opportunities available for your faculty or take the initiative to apply for jobs, fellowships, service opportunities;
- Search MyCoNECT career vacancies for the latest list of available internship opportunities.
- Attend our annual Career Fair event for networking opportunities and internship vacancies
- Continue to build your professional network;
- Be open to considering unexpected opportunities, or different pathways to your goal;
- Never stop learning and attaining valuable experiences and networks after you graduate whether through travel, volunteer work, or engagements such as networking sessions.

4. Do's & Don'ts During Internship

After intense preparations prior to applying, there is still more things to keep in mind when doing your internship. Remember, your internship is a wonderful opportunity for you to not just gain experience and skills but more importantly, for you to make a good impression to be considered for a more permanent position or recommendation.

We have put together a number of suggestions which will hopefully help you have a beneficial and worthwhile internship.

1. **Be Punctual** - arriving earlier or on time for work and meetings will attest to your determination and commitment towards your work to your employers and colleagues;
2. **Dress appropriately** - This reminds us of the time when we have received a feedback from one employer that they once had an intern who showed up with jeans and a t-shirt on the FIRST day of his/her internship. Under no circumstances should you dress casually to work unless it is what is required or you have gotten the go ahead from your supervisor;
3. **Work Smart** - no matter how menial you view the task given, take them seriously and do them properly. Meet your deadlines and if you are not sure how to proceed, ask relevant questions on how to go ahead. You will constantly be observed and judged so yes, the small things matter very much. If you give quality work on the small stuffs, this will encourage them to trust you with more important responsibilities;
4. **Be Modest** - you do not want to be that person who voices out every right thing you did when it comes to your assigned work. Most times, supervisors watch you closely so they know how well you did;
5. **Maintain a positive and can-do attitude and outlook** - A good or pleasant attitude is considered to be one of the most important attributes employers and colleagues look for and this can be the determining factor on whether they would want you around as part of the full-time members of the team;
6. **Get to know your colleagues or supervisors better** - forming good relationship with the people you work with can help give you an idea of how it will be really like to work at the place full-time. You can also learn valuable advice and life lessons from them that could help you in your career journey such as how they started, interview tips, and what they look for in an employee.
7. **Be polite and courteous** - while it is a given that each of us have our own views and opinions on different matters or issues, there is no need for you to discuss sensitive topics and private topics with your colleagues or force them to accept your views. Then again, this applies to how it is preferred for you to act with the whole of humanity as a whole. Stay on the safe side and be mindful of others' feelings;
8. **Act like a full-timer** - remove the thought that you are only there temporarily. Introduce yourself to as many people as possible, show commitment in your assigned tasks, show interest in the department or company, refrain from complaining and attempt to join in work events when invited;

9. **Socialize: Build professional relationships and find a mentor** - Take this opportunity to build social connections with your colleagues and bosses as well as clients that you are assigned to work with. Learn more about the people and roles of everyone in the organisation, identify those whom you can trust and admire and ask for their feedback. Having these people in your corner can strengthen the organisation's resolve to seek you out or recommend you for a more permanent position.
10. **Stay in touch** - Whether you are thinking of getting back for another internship placement after you graduate or walk away without a permanent job offer, keep in contact and maintain a good relationship with your internship supervisor and everyone you have gotten to know there. This will be easier for you to get good references from them and have their recommendations if they know of good positions that have opened up in their social as well as professional networks.