

The Asia-Pacific International University Internship Program and Its Effects on Students' Employability Readiness

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Abstract - This study explores the effects of Asia-Pacific International University's (AIU) internship program on students' readiness for employment after graduation. Internships are a key part of education, offering students practical experience and skill development to complement their academic knowledge. The research focuses on five areas: internship duration, quality, relevance to students' fields of study, opportunities to apply and improve skills, and overall employability readiness. Data were collected from 72 students who participated in AIU's internship program. Descriptive analysis and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyze the data. The findings show that internship quality and opportunities for skill application are the most important factors influencing students' preparedness for the workforce. Students rated these areas highly, indicating that well-organized internships and practical experiences play a crucial role in career readiness. However, internship duration and relevance to academic fields were found to have less impact on employability outcomes. The study highlights the program's strengths, such as offering high-quality internships aligned with academic disciplines, but also identifies areas for improvement. Specifically, more focus is needed on providing opportunities for hands-on learning and skill-building to better prepare students for the demands of the job market. These findings can help AIU enhance its internship program and improve students' career prospects in today's competitive workforce.

Keywords: Internship program, employability readiness, skill development, internship quality, relevance to field of study

I. INTRODUCTION

Finding a job after graduation is a challenge many students face. While some begin their job search during their final year, others start earlier in their second or third year. Despite these efforts, many students struggle to secure employment. A significant factor contributing to this challenge is the limited connection between universities and companies. Without strong industry ties, students miss valuable opportunities to gain real-world experience and build professional networks, both of which are crucial for securing a job.

At Asia-Pacific International University, the internship program is designed to prepare students for the workforce. However, the program has several shortcomings that limit its effectiveness. One major issue is the lack of strong partnerships between the university and

companies. As a result, students often struggle to find internships in their desired fields. Instead, they must search for opportunities on their own, which can be both stressful and discouraging.

In addition to this, the internship period is relatively short. This limited timeframe prevents students from gaining meaningful work experience or developing essential practical skills. Consequently, many students graduate feeling unprepared for the challenges of the competitive job market. The lack of sufficient internship experience leaves them feeling uncertain about their abilities and anxious about finding suitable employment.

These issues make it harder for students to compete with graduates from universities that offer more robust industry connections and longer, more comprehensive internship programs. To address these challenges, Asia-Pacific International University should focus on building stronger relationships with companies and organizations to create more internship opportunities for students. Additionally, extending the duration of the internship program would provide students with more time to gain hands-on experience and better prepare them for their future careers. By addressing these issues, the university can enhance the effectiveness of its internship program and improve students' employability readiness.

Research Objective

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of Asia-Pacific International University's (AIU) internship program on students' employability readiness. The research focuses on four qualities of internships: internship duration, quality, relevance to students' fields of study, opportunities to apply and improve skills, and their impact on students' employability readiness.

Hypotheses

There are two hypotheses for this study.

Hypothesis (H1): Duration of internships significantly influences students' employability readiness.

Hypothesis (H2): Quality of internships significantly influences students' employability readiness.

Hypothesis (H3): Internships with tasks relevant to the students' field of study significantly influence students' employability readiness.

Hypothesis (H4): Internships that provide opportunities for skill application and enhancement significantly influence students' employability readiness.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Internship Programs in Employability Readiness

Internship programs have become an essential component of modern higher education. They provide a critical bridge between academic instruction and professional application, allowing students to enhance their employability through practical experience. These programs serve as a testing ground where students can apply theoretical knowledge gained in classrooms to solve real-world problems. This practical exposure helps students develop a wide range of skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork.

Employers often seek candidates who possess more than just academic qualifications. The ability to demonstrate hands-on experience in relevant fields significantly boosts students' chances of securing employment. Internship programs help students understand workplace expectations, professional behaviors, and industry-specific demands. Furthermore, internships enhance students' confidence by giving them the opportunity to contribute to meaningful projects and interact with industry professionals.

Experiential Learning and Skill Development

Experiential learning, as defined by Kolb (1984), is a process through which knowledge is created by transforming experience. Internships embody this concept by offering students immersive experiences in professional settings. These opportunities allow students to refine both technical skills, such as industry-specific tools and technologies, and soft skills, such as leadership, communication, and adaptability.

For instance, Jackson (2014) emphasizes the role of internships in fostering critical thinking and adaptability. By navigating real-world challenges, students develop resilience and learn to work effectively under pressure. Additionally, internships provide a safe environment for students to make mistakes and learn from them, which is a crucial aspect of professional growth.

Benefits of Internships for Employability

Internships not only prepare students for the workforce but also improve their chances of securing employment. Tomlinson (2008) found that graduates with internship experience are more likely to be hired compared to their peers without such experience. Internships offer a unique opportunity for students to establish professional networks, which often play a pivotal role in job placements.

Furthermore, internships contribute to the formation of a professional identity. Gault, Redington, and Schlager (2000) observed that exposure to workplace norms and practices helps students align their career aspirations with industry standards. These experiences also provide clarity on career paths, enabling students to make informed decisions about their future.

Internships and Cultural Competence

In today's globalized economy, cultural competence has emerged as a critical skill for professionals. Internships expose students to diverse work environments, allowing them to

develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability. Pritchard and Green (2017) highlight the role of internships in preparing students to work in multicultural teams, an ability highly valued by employers.

By interacting with colleagues from various cultural backgrounds, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and navigate cultural nuances effectively. These experiences not only enhance workplace harmony but also foster innovation by encouraging diverse viewpoints.

Internship and Experiential Learning at Asia-Pacific International University

Asia-Pacific International University (AIU) has integrated internships into its curriculum to ensure students are well-prepared for their professional journeys. Located in Muak Lek, Thailand, AIU serves a diverse student population, offering undergraduate and graduate programs in fields such as Business, Nursing, IT, and Education.

AIU emphasizes experiential learning by providing students with opportunities to engage in internships and community service projects. These initiatives aim to cultivate not only technical expertise but also leadership, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility. The university supports students throughout their internship journeys by offering mentorship, regular check-ins, and workshops on professional development.

Through its holistic approach, AIU ensures that students gain practical skills and a deep understanding of workplace dynamics. This comprehensive strategy aligns with the university's mission to nurture the mind, body, and spirit, preparing students for meaningful contributions to society.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- 1. Research Design:** This study adopts a quantitative methods approach to explore the impact of internships on students' employability readiness. The quantitative component involves a structured survey to gather numerical data on key factors such as internship quality, duration, relevance to the field of study, skill application, and employability outcomes.
- 2. Participants/Data Sources:** The target population consists of undergraduate and graduate students from Asia-Pacific International University who have completed their internships. There were 1,120 students in the first semester of 2024-2025. However, there were about 185 students who were involved in the internships. A stratified random sampling method is employed to ensure representation across various academic disciplines, such as Business Administration, Education, Nursing, and Information Technology. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 0.05 precision level, the sample size is 126.
- 3. Tools and Instruments:** A Google Form was created with structured questions covering two parts. Part one involved five demographic items (gender, major of study, and year of study): Part two involved a total of 20 Likert-scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly

Agree) items. Five measurement items for each of the internship duration, quality, relevance to students' fields of study, opportunities to apply and improve skills, and students' employability readiness.

4. **Procedures:** The survey link was shared with 130 students who were involved in internship programs via email and social media platforms used by AIU students, ensuring accessibility for all potential respondents. A total of 72 completed responses were collected for this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to measure the reliability of a set of survey items. None of the items and the constructs received less than 0.80 Cronbach's alpha coefficient value.
5. **Analysis Techniques:** Data from the Google Forms was exported to SPSS for analysis, including descriptive statistics and multiple regression models.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data

The demographic profile of the 72 respondents in Table 1 reveals that there are almost equal male and female students (48.6% and 51.4%), the majority of them are business students (43.1%), and senior students (58.3%).

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Information (n = 72)

Demographic Feature	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	35	48.6
Female	37	51.4
Major		
Theology	7	9.7
Business Administration	31	43.1
Nursing	6	8.3
Education	15	20.8
Art and Humanity	2	2.8
Information Technology	4	5.6
English	2	2.8
Science	5	6.9
Academic Level		
Junior	25	34.7
Senior	42	58.3
Graduate	5	6.9

Level of Internship Qualities

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation (SD) scores for five key variables assessing the internship qualities at Asia-Pacific International University. These scores are

based on responses from 72 participants, providing insights into the effectiveness of internships at Asia-Pacific International University.

The duration of the internship received a high average score of 3.49, indicating that most participants felt the length of their internship was sufficient to gain meaningful experience. The relatively low standard deviation (0.54) suggests consistency in responses, with most students agreeing that the time allotted for their internships was appropriate.

Internship quality received the highest mean score of 3.64, reflecting positive perceptions of the internship's organization, relevance, and overall value. This high score highlights that students generally found their internships to be well-structured and beneficial. However, the standard deviation of 0.71 indicates some variability, suggesting that while many students had excellent experiences, a few found the quality to be less satisfactory.

The relevance of internships to participants' academic fields was rated high, with a mean score of 3.49. This suggests that students were able to apply their academic knowledge during their internships. The SD of 0.69 shows some variation in responses, reflecting differences in how closely aligned internships were with individual fields of study.

Opportunity for skill application and enhancement received an average mean score of 3.08, indicating mixed perceptions of the opportunity to apply and improve skills during internships. While some participants reported meaningful skill-building experiences, others felt there was room for improvement. The low SD (0.38) suggests that most participants shared similar views on this aspect, even if the experiences were not uniformly strong.

Employability readiness, which reflects how well internships prepare students for the workforce, was rated at an average level with a mean score of 3.11. This indicates that while internships contributed to students' job readiness, there is still room to enhance their effectiveness. The SD of 0.54 reflects moderate agreement among participants on this variable.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation Score (n = 72)

Variable	Mean	SD	Level
Duration of internship	3.49	.54	High
Internship quality	3.64	.71	High
Relevance to field of study	3.49	.69	High
Opportunity for skill application and enhancement	3.08	.38	Average
Employability Readiness	3.11	.54	Average

Relationship Between Internship Qualities and Employability Readiness

Table 3 provides the results of a regression analysis conducted to identify the factors influencing employability readiness among 72 respondents. Four independent variables were analyzed: duration of the internship, internship quality, relevance to the field of study, and opportunities for skill application and enhancement. The findings reveal that the duration of

internships does not have a statistically significant impact on employability readiness ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that the length of time spent in an internship alone is not a major factor in determining readiness. Thus, hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Internship quality is a significant positive predictor of employability readiness ($p < 0.05$). The positive Beta value (0.319) indicates that high-quality internships, characterized by structure, mentorship, and meaningful tasks, significantly improve students' readiness for employment. Thus, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

The relevance of internships to students' academic fields does not significantly affect employability readiness ($p > 0.05$). While relevant internships may enhance academic understanding, this alignment does not directly predict how prepared students feel for the job market. Thus, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Opportunities for skill application and enhancement are the strongest predictors of employability readiness ($p < 0.01$). The high Beta value (0.446) indicates that internships offering practical, hands-on experiences and skill-building activities play a crucial role in preparing students for the workforce. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Table 3 Regression Table for Employability Readiness (N = 72)

Variables	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	.094		.221	.826
Duration of internship	-.015	-.015	-.142	.887
Internship quality	.241*	.319	2.498	.015
Relevance to field of study	.074	.096	.922	.360
Opportunity for skill application and enhancement	.627**	.446	4.405	.000

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, $R = .719$, $R Square = .518$

V. CONCLUSION

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of internship programs on students' employability readiness at Asia-Pacific International University. The findings highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in the university's internship framework, offering valuable insights into factors that influence students' transition from academia to the workforce.

The results indicate that internship quality and opportunities for Skill Application and Enhancement are the most significant predictors of employability readiness. High-quality internships, characterized by structured guidance, meaningful tasks, and mentorship, play a crucial role in preparing students for professional challenges. Additionally, internships that provide hands-on experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, fostering the development of essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance

of experiential learning in bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application (Kolb, 1984; Jackson, 2014).

In contrast, the study reveals that Duration of Internship and Relevance to the Field of Study do not significantly influence employability readiness. While longer internships and academic alignment may enhance satisfaction, they lack the direct impact of quality and skill-building opportunities. This suggests that the content and structure of internships are more critical than their length or field relevance.

These findings have practical implications for improving internship programs. Universities should focus on designing high-quality internships with robust mentorship and skill-oriented tasks, ensuring that students gain meaningful experiences. Additionally, opportunities for feedback and reflection should be integrated to help students maximize their learning.

Recommendation

To help students become more ready for employment, Asia-Pacific International University should focus on improving the quality of its internship programs. High-quality internships should include clear guidance from mentors, meaningful tasks that allow students to apply what they have learned, and regular feedback to help them grow. The university could work more closely with companies and organizations to create diverse internship opportunities that match the needs of the real-world job market. For example, forming partnerships with industries could ensure that students are exposed to practical experiences that are relevant and beneficial. Additionally, the university should provide workshops before internships to prepare students with skills like workplace communication and professionalism. After the internships, reflection sessions could help students review their experiences, identify what they learned, and set goals for the future. These steps would ensure that internships are not only a requirement but also a valuable learning experience.

Limitation

This study was designed to collect data from 120 participants, including both undergraduate and graduate students, to better understand how internships affect employability. However, only 72 students participated because it was difficult to reach graduate students. Many graduates had already moved on to full-time jobs or were no longer in touch with the university, making it hard to include their feedback. This smaller sample size may limit how well the findings represent all students, especially the experiences of graduate students. Graduate students might have unique insights into how internships helped them in their careers, but this perspective could not be fully explored in this study.

Suggestion for Future Research

Future research should address the challenges of including graduate students in studies like this. Building stronger alumni networks can make it easier to stay in touch with graduates. Using professional platforms like LinkedIn and working with the university's career services can also help researchers connect with former students. In addition, future research could follow students over a longer period, from their time as undergraduates through their early careers, to understand how internships shape their career paths. Other areas to explore include

the impact of mentorship during internships, the value of industry-specific experiences, and the development of essential skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Researchers could also expand their studies to include students from different universities. Comparing internship programs across multiple institutions would provide a broader understanding of what works best and help improve internships on a larger scale.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

There are three authors for this paper. Below are the contributions of each author.

1. Chutimar: conceptualization, literature review, and data collection.
2. Damrong Sattayawaksakul: conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, and supervision.
3. Seung Yeon Choi: investigation, data collection, and writing.

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