

# **Determinants of Internship Effectiveness for University Students in Hong Kong**

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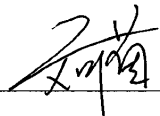
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## **Abstract**

Internship has been viewed as an effective approach to equip university students with preliminary job knowledge and experience, thus enhancing their employability in the competitive labor market. Focusing on indentifying and evaluating the determinants of internship effectiveness, this study aims to explore the extent to which the characteristics of student interns and organization practices account for their internship success.

Based on literature review and the finding of three focus group discussions, three individual factors (academic preparedness, positive attitude, and self-initiative) and four organizational factors (challenge job, effectiveness of supervision, task clarity, and compensation) were identified as important ingredients of an effective internship. To explore it further, a quantitative research involving 113 student interns was conducted and the results showed that the individual factors played a major role in determining internship effectiveness but effectiveness of supervision and task clarity were also positively associated with the success of the internship programme.

Implications and examples of practical application are discussed and recommendations are given to student interns and organizations to maximize the effectiveness of internship programme. In the end, limitations of the study are evaluated and suggestions are provided for advancement of future research on this topic.

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## **PART ONE: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

In spite of the fact that the Hong Kong SAR government has been making efforts over these years to improve the situation, graduate unemployment remains to be an unsolved problem. The competition for jobs is extremely intensive among university graduates. Besides those from the eight local universities, competitors also include graduates from post-secondary institutions, associate degree holders, as well as diploma and higher diploma holders, mounting great pressure on the university graduates who have no working experience. (Li, 2009) Due to Hong Kong's "well-developed yet close to saturation" economy, there is little room for job creation. Therefore, increasing the employability of graduates becomes a major challenge for students, organizations and universities.

### **1.2 Problem Statements**

In recent years, internships have exploded in popularity as an effective approach to enhance student's employability and career development. Over the decade, a large number of academic research have explored the positive outcomes of internships. (Taylor, 1988; Raymond , McNabb & Matthaiei,1993 ; Knouse, Tanner &Harris, 1999; Coco,2000; Gault, Redington & Schlager, 2000;Callanan & Benzing , 2004; Merrit, 2005;Plunkett, 2007)

While there is an extensive of research focus on the beneficial outcomes of internships to the students and organizations, surprisingly, very little empirical study aims to identify the determinants of internship effectiveness, that is, what assure a successful internship?

Regarding its pervasiveness, there is a need to evaluate factors that contribute to a successful internship programme for university students, so as to maximize its positive outcomes to both students and organizations.

Therefore the main problem in this study is identified as: To what extent do the

characteristics of interns and organization practices account for the variance of the effectiveness of internship?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in this research. Firstly, focus-group discussions were conducted to identify the contributing factors of internship success. Secondly, the relationships between the identified predictors of internship effectiveness and the outcomes of successful internships were examined empirically. The independent variables were characteristics of interns and organization practices while the dependent variables were interns' evaluation of their internship effectiveness. With a focus on the nature and strength of the relationships among these variables, this study aimed to determine what elements students and organizations need to bring to achieve a successful internship experience. Discussion and suggestions were given in response to the findings.

## **PART TWO: Preliminary Research -Focus Group Discussions**

To select the most representative predictors of internship success for the study, a preliminary research with three focus groups was conducted to identify what important factors are generally considered to determine internship effectiveness.

### **2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Sample**

The demographic data of three focus groups is presented in Table 1 (Appendix C). From the observed data (N=18), 10 focus group participants (56%) were female and 8 (44%) were male. All of them were final year students from business major in Hong Kong Baptist University.

Participants of Human Resources Management option were the majority in which 6 (33%) were from this study. Accounting option and Marketing option had the same number of participants that each accounted for 17%. Also, China Business Studies and Finance both



had 2 participants (11%) in the focus group discussions. The remaining participants were studying Economics (6%) and Information System Management (6%).

The business nature of the companies in which the internships were taken by the 18 participants include Financial Institution (28%), Business Service (17%), Trading (17%), Hospitality & Tourism Service(11%), and the remaining 5 participants worked in Government (6%), Real Estate(6%), Community, Social & Personal Services(6%), Engineering, Architectural & Technical Services (6%), and Transport, Storage & Communication (6%).

10 participants took internships with a length of 2 to 3 months (56%), another 5 (28%) worked for 1 to 2 months and the rest were involved in the 120-hour internship programme. 94 % of them took internships that were related to their major of study while only 17% of the sample received academic credit for the internship.

## **2.2 Focus Group Finding**

The detail records of the discussions are presented in Appendix C. In sharing their opinions towards internships, 8 respondents (44%) participated in the focus group agreed that the experience was both “beneficial and effective” while 6 participants (33%) regarded their internships as beneficial but not as effective as they wished. Especially, they admitted they had encountered difficulties and negative feelings during internship, but after all, they regarded it as a platform for them to “learn beyond textbook”. In contrast, 2 participants (11%) claimed that their internships are not beneficial at all and 2 (11%) said their attitudes towards internship were neutral.

When asked about most important ingredients of successful internship, “support from supervisors/colleagues”, “task clarity”, “challenge tasks” were mentioned the most. 5 participants (28%) claimed that support and guidance from supervisors and colleagues were the most significant factor to achieve a successful internship. Furthermore, 4 out of 18

participants expressed that internship programme should have a systematic structure, in which assignments and expectations for interns were clearly stated. In addition, 3 participants (17%) expressed that the extent to which the job is challenge affects internship effectiveness. For example, monotonous and trivial tasks were the major reason why they felt their internships were less effective. In contrast, students who experienced completion of relatively important, difficult and new tasks described their internship as “fruitful”. On the other hand, “self-initiative”, “academic preparedness”, “positive attitude” and “mentor” were also expressed by participants as important factors that contributed to their successful internship experience. According to 2 participants (11%), “self-initiative” was important even when intern’s job was not satisfactory and lack supervisory and peer support. They explained, being proactive to understand the job and the company helped to reduce the negative effects of a poorly organized internship. Another 2 participants said “being able to apply what have learned in university is of top priority in internship”. Therefore, to enhance internship effectiveness, it would be preferable if the interns have the basic knowledge of the field and the internship was related to their major of study. The remaining 2 participants chose “positive attitude” and “mentor” as the most important ingredients of a successful internship.

In the discussion of the benefits of internship, “knowledge about the world of work”, “career skills” and “career focus” were the top three opinions. 5 participants (28%) expressed that the most noteworthy function of internship was to enable them to learn about the industry or the operation of workplace. Additionally, learning useful skills such as interpersonal skills, communication skills were claimed by 4 participants (22%) as their greatest benefits of internship. Moreover, 3 participants (17%) expressed “career focus” as the major benefits and another 3 preferred “relationship building”. 2 respondents (11%) indicated they gained the most from the “practical benefits” brought by internship while one (6%) ranked “reality check” as a top benefit.

When discussing the extent to which the internship experience affected the evaluation of the organization, 7 participants (39%) agreed that the “company environment” was the main

factor that influenced their evaluation. 5 respondents (28%) said they would view an organization more positively if it could launch a well-organized internship programme. Some pointed out that clear task assignments, clarified expectation, and regular feedback and sharing sessions showed a company's commitment to internship. According to 5 participants, being respected and treated like a member of the organization ("sense of belonging") enhanced the organization's image in their minds. Apart from this, one (6%) said that the benefits enjoyed by other colleagues gave them the impression that the company is a good place to work.

When encouraged to give suggestions for future interns and organizations, "systematic planning for internship", "supervisory support" and "clear expectations" were the most popular opinions. According to 6 participants (33%), it was advisable for companies to develop a systematic plan for internship programme. All too often, interns were treated as part-time worker where they were frustrated by two extreme situations: no task assigned and too many unimportant but tedious tasks assigned. Moreover, 5 participants (28%) suggested supervisors should provide more support during internship. On the other hand, 3 participants (17%) pointed out that clear expectation should be established by both the interns and the organization. For example, job description and requirement for the internship should be understood before the internship. 2 participants (11%) expressed the idea that interns should not simply rely on the company's assignments, instead, they should take the initiative to learn. The remaining two participants made suggestions about "reasonable compensation" and "proper job match".

Based on the focus group discussions, a general picture of determinants of internship effectiveness is developed. Combined with the following literature review, it laid the foundation of a theoretical framework for a quantitative research.

## **PART THREE: Quantitative Research**

### **3.1 Literature Review**

### **3.1.1 Definition of Internships**

Internships are defined as “a form of on-the-job training in which people gain supervised experience and practical knowledge that is relevant to a specific field”.(Patton & Dial,1988) Citing DiLorenzo-Aiss and Mathisen (1996), a typical internship program is featured by four criteria: (1) a specified number of work hours, (2) the work may be paid or unpaid, (3) credit is awarded, and (4) oversight is provided by a faculty coordinator or other university representative and a corporate counterpart. According to American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (2006), a recent definition for internship is "work experience in industrial, business, or government work situations that leverages the class guidelines experience through practical work experience." Being a valuable component of higher education academic program, Internship is believed to create win-win situation for the students, organization as well as the university. (Coco, 2000)

### **3.1.1 Determinants of Internship Effectiveness**

The competency and motivation of all parties involved are indispensable for a successful internship programs (Coco, 2000). Eight predictors of internship effectiveness are suggested in the literature, including three individual factors: (1) academic preparedness,(2) positive attitude,(3) self-initiative and four organizational factors: (4) challenge job,(5) autonomy, (6) effectiveness of supervision (7)task role clarity (8) compensation

#### **1) Academic preparedness.**

Some previous researches show that academic preparedness is one of the determinants of internship effectiveness. (Basow & Byrne, 1993; Beard, 1997; Campbell & Kovar, 1994; Beard & Morton,1999). Students are warned that they should not attempt internships “prematurely” (Basow & Byrne, 1993) and interns should possess a general understanding of the professional field and key concepts (Bourland-Davis, Graham and Fulmer, 1997). In addition, the academic preparation also provide the interns with more opportunities during the internship (Beard,1997). Many internship programme require students to be well prepared in terms of completion of a certain level of course work and attainment of a minimum GPA (Clark ,2003), and research results have also shown that students with higher

GPA's were more likely to do an internship than were those with lower GPA's (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999).

Hypothesis 1: Interns' academic preparedness is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

## **2) Positive attitude**

Interns with a positive attitude towards the internships are more likely to achieve internship effectiveness. (Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999) When they start the internship, students are expected to demonstrate the attitudes similar to new, full-time staff. In addition, the internship will be more beneficial if they regard it as a potential learning opportunity and occupational experience. (Beard, 1997) Evidence also shows that interns whose expectations towards internship are positive and realistic tend to find the internship experience as satisfactory, thus leading to a positive internship experience. One literature also explored the relationship between interns' interview experience during the selection process and the perception of the overall internship experience. To some extent, positive impression of internship from the interview is related to positive perceptions of the related vocational field. (Feldman & Weitz, 1990)

Hypothesis 2: Interns' positive attitude is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

## **3) Self-initiative**

Literature indicates Interns' self-initiative plays an important part in internship success. (Patton & Dial,1988;Basow & Byrne,1993; Beard,1997;Beard & Morton, 1999) They are responsible to themselves to take full advantage of the internship by asking questions, making suggestions, enhancing interpersonal relationships with other employees, accepting and learning from constructive feedback, and demonstrating interests in the organization they are serving (Patton & Dial,1988). Basow and Byrne (1993) also encourage students to volunteer for assignments and to make their wants and needs known. It is also found by Beard (1997) that both supervisors and the interns share the assumption that interns should

show initiative by aggressively “finding things to do”. Meanwhile, supervisors generally respond positively to students’ demonstrated needs.

Hypothesis 3: Interns’ self-initiative is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

#### **4) Challenge job**

Literature shows that characteristics of the work itself, such as challenge job, autonomy and task variety, exert significant influence on employees’ job satisfaction and performance. (Hackman&Oldman, 1980; Taylor,1988). Survey shows that interns expected challenging work where they could have opportunities to learn and to contribute to the organization. (Rothman, 2007). Furthermore, interns who are assigned interesting and challenging job are found to be more satisfied with the internship experience.(Gabris & Mitchell,1989) In fact,challenge job requires interns to develop new skills and give them the opportunity to work with at least some level of independence (Meyer & Allen,1988).It is also an opportunity for them to apply theoretical concepts to the workplace. (Cuneen & Sidwell, 1994). As a result, some studies already suggest “substantive, creative, and challenging work” should be offer to interns during the programme (Coco, 2000)

Hypothesis 4: Job challenge is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

#### **5) Effectiveness of supervision**

The strategic role of supervisors may determine the internship experience is positive or not. One research shows that interns' perception of supervision effectiveness is significantly correlated with job placement success and overall job performance. (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989).Effective supervision during internship, with characteristics such as “being supportive, demonstrates high work standard and competence, provide frequent feedback and develops individual through coaching”, provides more opportunities for individuals to explore career interests and resolve conflicts (Taylor,1988) .Another study suggests that supervisor support can represent a commitment to the employee by the organization (Mowday,1998). A supervisor can help to build the employee's commitment to by showing interest and

communicating the organization's valuing of him or her (Dixon et. al., 2005).

Hypothesis 5: Effectiveness of supervision is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

## **6) Task Clarity**

According to Sawyer (1992), role theory has distinguished between task outputs (e.g. task goals and standards) and activities (e.g. how work is accomplished). Specifically, task output clarity consists of the task goals and standards expected of the intern. Some studies found that clarity of tasks can improve internship effectiveness while the periodic lack of work or poor planning of work assignments caused frustration among interns (Rothman, 2007). In addition, unclear roles contribute to stress and poor performance of employees (Kahn et. al., 1964). Other literatures make recommendations such as explaining rationale behind work assignments to the interns (Coco; Tackett et al., 2001), developing a job description (Crumbley & Sumners, 1998), providing a reasonable time frame for accomplishing tasks and establishing a clear understanding of what is to be accomplished (Rothman, 2007).

Hypothesis 6: Task role clarity is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

## **7) Compensation**

Literatures indicate that compensated interns have more successful internships. Compensation is strongly recommended to make the experience realistic (Madoch, 1980), and to keep interest level and productivity high. (Ames, 1986) Offering compensation is a sign of support to interns (Berger, 1992). Although compensation for an intern's work can be a certain unit of academic credit, but the best way to pay is still monetary reward, and survey shows the interns receiving payment evaluated their internships higher. (Basow and Byrne, 1993). According to Hamilton (1992), even if it is a minimum wage, compensation acts as a reminder that students are in the "real world" where they are supposed to think and feel like "employees/professionals". Furthermore, by paying the interns, the sponsoring organization can demonstrate its commitment in making the internship meaningful.

Hypothesis 7: Compensation is positively associated with internship effectiveness

### **3.1.3 Internship Effectiveness**

Several constructs are used in an extensive body of research to evaluate internship effectiveness, including development of career skills, career focus (e.g. greater focus on a career goal), career-related benefits (e.g. obtaining mentors), practical outcomes (e.g. personal references), crystallization of vocational self-concept and work values, reality shock level, employment opportunities, early career success and satisfaction after internship (Taylor,1988 ;Beard& Morton ,1999;Gault, Redington & Schlage,2000). Based on their similarity and relative importance to the nature of this study, two major aspects are emphasized here: a) Career skills and b) Career focus.

#### **a) Career skills**

Four categories of preparation skills are found to be of great significance among hiring criteria, they include:

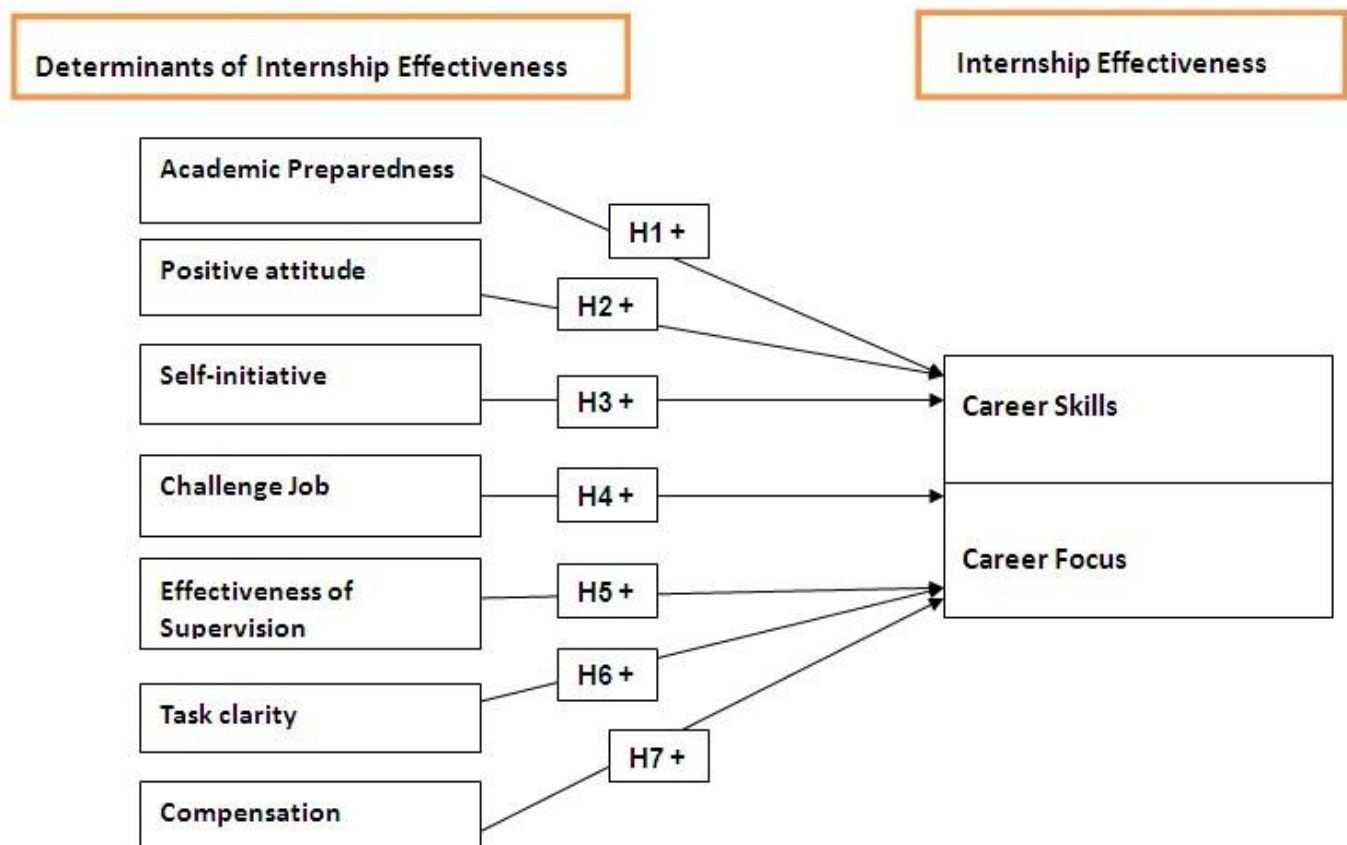
- 1) Academic skills: analytical skills, computer applications, creative thinking, information search, and problem solving  
(Kelley&Gaedeke,1990; Karakaya & Karakaya 1996;Floyd &Gordon,1998)
- 2) Communication skills: oral communication, written communication, proposal writing  
(Kelley&Gaedeke,1990; Karakaya & Karakaya 1996;Floyd &Gordon,1998)
- 3) Interpersonal skills: leadership/teamwork and relationship building  
(Boatwright & Stamps, 1988;Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Karakaya & Karakaya 1996)
- 4) Job acquisition skills: resumes writing, job interviewing, and job networking. They share a basis in written and oral communication and relationship building but focus specifically on the attainment of employment and other aspects of career advancement. (Gault et al.,2000).



## b) Career focus

Career focus includes the recognition of the personal valued, work-related outcomes and the vocational abilities and interests needed to attain satisfaction from the work. (Taylor, 1992) Interns benefit from developing career aspirations and self-concept (Madoch, 1980). Some studies argue that students with internship experience reported a greater sense of responsibility and career development. (Hursch & Borzak, 1979; Williams, 1990; Eyler, 1992) It is also suggested in the literature that career focus is associated with positive belief about intern's career choice and future job satisfaction. (Taylor, 1992) In addition, interns who enjoy a successful internship experience feel positive changes in personal and social efficacy (Bernstein, 1976) and career self-efficacy. (Braswell & Cobia, 2000)

## 3.2 Theoretical Framework and Statement of hypotheses



**Hypothesis1:** Interns' academic preparedness is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis2:** Interns' positive attitude is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis3:** Interns' self-initiative is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis4:** Job challenge is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis5:** Effectiveness of supervision is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis6:** Task clarity is positively associated with internship effectiveness.

**Hypothesis7:** Compensation is positively associated with internship effectiveness

### **3.3 Methodology**

#### **3.3.1 Research Design**

This is a mixed method study attempting to identify and evaluate the determinants of internship effectiveness.

A preliminary study was conducted to identify what important variables to be included in the hypothesis. Three focus group discussions were conducted with 18 student interns from Hong Kong Baptist University with the aim to find out factors that are perceived to contribute to successful internship experiences. There were five guiding questions prepared for the discussions (see Appendix A).

Combined with the literature review, the hypothesis model was established and assured. To test the hypotheses, a correlation and cross-sectional study was conducted where both paper-based and internet-based questionnaire were used. In order to clarify the questionnaire, question wording and question applicability, a pilot was done first before the

formal distribution of the questionnaires (excluding the focus group participants). By using the data and comments collected in the pilot test, the instrument was revised, and the finalized version of questionnaire was confirmed and distributed to 113 student interns in Hong Kong Baptist University.

### **3.3.2 Measurements**

The survey instrument (see Appendix B) is consisted of three main parts: (a) assessment of independent variables, (b) assessment of dependent variables, and (c) other descriptive data. A brief description of each construct is demonstrated as follows:

#### **Independent Variables**

##### (1) Academic preparedness

To measure academic preparedness, two items adapted from Beard & Morton (1999) and cumulative GPA were used to measure the extent to which students perceive themselves as being academically prepared for the internships, e.g. "In my internship, my university courses gave me the skills needed to perform well on the job".

##### (2) Positive attitude

To assess the positive attitude of interns, two items adapted from Beard & Morton (1999) and one from Feldman and Weitz (1990) were used to measure the extent to which students regard the internship as a valuable opportunity to work and learn. e.g. "In my internship, I treated it like a real job".

##### (3) Self-initiative

Two items adapted from Beard & Morton (1999) and two items developed according to Patton & Dial (1988) were used to assess the level of self-initiative of interns, e.g. "I often volunteered for tasks".

##### (4) Challenge job

To measure job challenge, two items adapted from the job variety dimension of Job

Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham's, 1976) were used. Samples include "the job required me to use a number of complex or high level skills".

#### (5) Effectiveness of supervision

Effectiveness of supervision was measured through one item adapted from Beard & Morton (1999), e.g. "My supervisor considered my interests and goals and adapted the internship accordingly" and three items from Greenhaus et al. (1990), e.g. "My supervisor provided assignments that gave me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills".

#### (6) Task Role Clarity

To measure task role clarity, two items from the Role clarity Index developed by Lyons (1971) were used, The items were slightly modified to fit the purpose of the study. e.g "I was given a clear plan about what assignments I had to do".

#### (7) Compensation

Finally, a continuous variable was used and coded into a dummy variable to find out the monetary compensation received by the respondents.

### **Dependent Variables**

Internship effectiveness was measured from two variables: career skills and career focus.

#### (1) Career skills

Respondents who had participated in an internship were asked to consider career training during the programme and to provide their level of agreement or disagreement with the phrase "prepared me exceptionally well" for each of the 11 skill areas. A 5-point scale was used (5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree). 11 items are adapted from Gault et al. (2000). A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .87 indicates a highly reliable scale.

#### (2) Career Focus

Six items adapted from the Vocational Rating Scale (VRS: Barrett & Tinsley, 1977) were

used to measure interns' clarity and certainty of vocationally relevant attributes and characteristics. The items were slightly modified to fit the purpose of this study, where respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each item on a 5-point scale with end points of strongly agree to strongly disagree, e.g. "After the internship, I know what kind of job fits me". The VRS is a relatively homogeneous sample of items, indicated by its Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .94.

### **Descriptive Items**

Respondents' major, gender, current year of study, cumulative GPA, length of internship, business nature of internship organization, whether the job nature related to their majors, and whether they received academic credits were included in the final part of the questionnaire.

### **3.3.3 Data Analysis**

Two types of data including qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The qualitative data collected from focus groups were evaluated and categorized according to the coding procedures suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), in which items were evaluated by frequency to identify the most frequently presented opinions. The quantitative data, on the other hand, was analyzed by the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) 14.0 for Windows, in which factor analysis, reliability analysis, correlation and multiple regression analysis were used.

## **3.4 Empirical Study and Results**

### **3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics**

The demographic data of 113 survey respondents from Hong Kong Baptist University is presented in Table 2 (Appendix C). The data of study major showed that business students were the main respondents (70%), followed by which were the Science (20%), Arts (5%) and Communication students (4%). Options such as Education and Social Science only contributed 5% to the study.

Among the sample, female student interns were slightly more than male student interns, accounting for 57.5% of the respondents.

As for the study year, 83 % of the respondents were final year students while only 16.8% students are from foundation year, year 1 and year 2.

The length of internship in which the respondents participated ranged from 120 hours to 4 months or longer. Most students took internships between 1 to 3 months, accounting for 69% of the sample. Only 12% of the respondents joined the 120-hour internship programme during the semester and 19% had been interned for 4 months or more.

The business nature of the organizing companies was mainly the service type (88%), and the rest were categorized as in the industrial sector.

A dominating proportion of respondents, namely 73%, took internships that were related to their feild of study while only 40% of the sample received academic credit for the internship.

### **3.4.2 Construct Validity and Reliability of Instrument**

To ensure the scales used in the study are both valid and reliable, factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted before testing the hypotheses. The aim of factor analysis is described as “the orderly simplification of a larger number of intercorrelated measures to a few representative constructs on factors”. (Ho, 2006) After handling significant cross-loadings, the results of the factor analysis among the independent variables are shown in Table 1. Questions PA03, SI01, SI02, CJ02 and ES01 were deleted and 12 questions were remained in the instruments to reflect the six independent variables: Academic Preparedness, Positive Attitude, Self-Initiative, Challenge Job, Effectiveness of Supervision and Task Clarity.

*Table 1 Result of Factor Analysis of Independent Variables  
(with factor loading less than 0.33 suppressed)*

Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
ES03	.890					
ES04	.851					
ES02	.813					
AP01		.895				
AP02		.894				
TC01			.871			
TC02			.821			
PA02				.891		
PA01				.778		
SI04					.820	
SI03					.769	
CJ01						.949

Examination of the factor loadings presented in table 2 indicates that one factor with 11 variables was adequate to reflect the dependent variable Internship Effectiveness. All cross-loaded variables were deleted as well as the two reverse coded questions to facilitate interpretation of the factors. Therefore, Career Skills and Career Focus were grouped together as Internship Effectiveness.

*Table 2 Result of Factor Analysis of Dependent Variables  
(with factor loading less than 0.33 suppressed)*

	Component
	1
CS01	.712
CS07	.700
CS04	.692
CF03	.666
CF04	.662
CF01	.636
CS11	.615
CS02	.609

To test the internal reliability of the scales, Cronbach's Alpha was used. Cronbach's Alpha is an estimate of the average of all the correlation coefficients of the items within a test. If alpha

is at or above the recommended threshold of 0.7, then this suggests that all of the items are reliable and the entire test is internally consistent. Table 3 summarizes the Cronbach's Alpha for all scales. The tests demonstrated that the measures of Academic Preparedness, Positive Attitude, Self-Initiative, Challenge Job, Effectiveness of Supervision ,Task Clarity and Internship Effectiveness were reasonably internally consistent as all the alphas are greater than 0.7.

*Table 3 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis (Significant Level: Alpha >= 0.7)*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Alphas</b>
Academic Preparedness	AP01,AP02	0.888
Positive Attitude	PA01,PA02	0.743
Self-initiative	SI03, SI04	0.748
Effectiveness of Supervision	ES02, ES03,ES04	0.888
Task Clarity	TC01, TC02	0.876
Internship Effectiveness	CS01,CS02,CS04,CS07 CS11,CF01,CF03,CF04	0.816

### **3.4.3 Empirical Findings**

#### **Mean, Standard Deviations and Zero-order Correlation**

The mean, standard deviations and zero-order correlations of all variables involved are presented in Appendix D. All the control variables and one of the independents variables, Compensation, were not significant in the relation with Internship Effectiveness. Furthermore, the remaining independent variables including Academic Preparedness ( $r=.537, p<.01$ ), Positive Attitude ( $r=.467, p<.01$ ), Self-Initiative ( $r=.578, p<.01$ ), Challenge Job ( $r=.223, p<.05$ ), Effectiveness of Supervision ( $r=.456, p<.01$ ), Task Clarity(  $r=.425, p<.01$ ) were significantly positive related to Internship Effectiveness. As a result, Hypothesis 1 to 6 are preliminary supported while hypothesis 7 were not.

#### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression is used to measure the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of independent variables. When the p-value of regression coefficient is less than 0.05 (significant level), then the independent variables affect the dependent variable, otherwise,



they don't have relationship. (Ho, 2006) Details of Multiple Regression Analysis are presented in Appendix E.

### Explaining Individual Factors

In the first regression, Academic Preparedness (AP), Positive Attitude (PA) and Self-initiative (SI) were the independent variables and Internship Effectiveness (IE) was the dependent variable. From the results presented in Table 4, Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 were supported in which AP, PA and SI were significant predictors of IE. Furthermore, the significant change in R-square ( $R^2=0.411$ ) indicated that 41.1% of the variance in IE was explained by the individual factors, suggesting that the individual variables (AP, PA and SI) represented a significantly more powerful set of predictors than the set of demographic and control variables. One surprising finding is that GPA was not a significant variable as well as the other control variables, with a p-value larger than 0.05.

*Table 4 Regression Result of Individual Factors*

Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
AP	.258**		
PA	.197*		
SI	.371**	.411	27.271

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### Explaining Organizational Factors

In the second regression, Challenge Job (CJ), Effectiveness of Supervision (ES), Task

Clarity (TC) and Compensation (CB) were the independent variables and Internship Effectiveness (IE) was the dependent variable. The results presented in Table 5 show support to hypothesis 5 and 6, in which ES and TC were significant predictors of Internship Effectiveness. However, CJ and CB are insignificant since the p-value of regression coefficient is larger than 0.05. In addition, the significant change in R-square ( $R^2=0.252$ ) indicated that 25.2% of the variance in Internship Effectiveness was explained by the organizational factors.

*Table 5 Regression Result of Organizational Factor*

Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
Compensation	-.041		
CJ	.117		
ES	.306**		
TC	.236*	.252	9.444

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Combining Individual Factors and Organizational Factors**

In the third regression, Academic Preparedness (AP), Positive Attitude (PA) and Self-initiative(SI), Challenge Job (CJ), Effectiveness of Supervision (ES), Task Clarity (TC) and Compensation (CB) were the independent variables and Internship Effectiveness (IE) was the dependent variable. The results presented in Table 6 shows that in comparison with the individual factors (AP and SI), organizational factors (CJ,ES,TC and CB) become insignificant this time with a p-value larger than 0.05 .

Table 6 Overall Regression Result

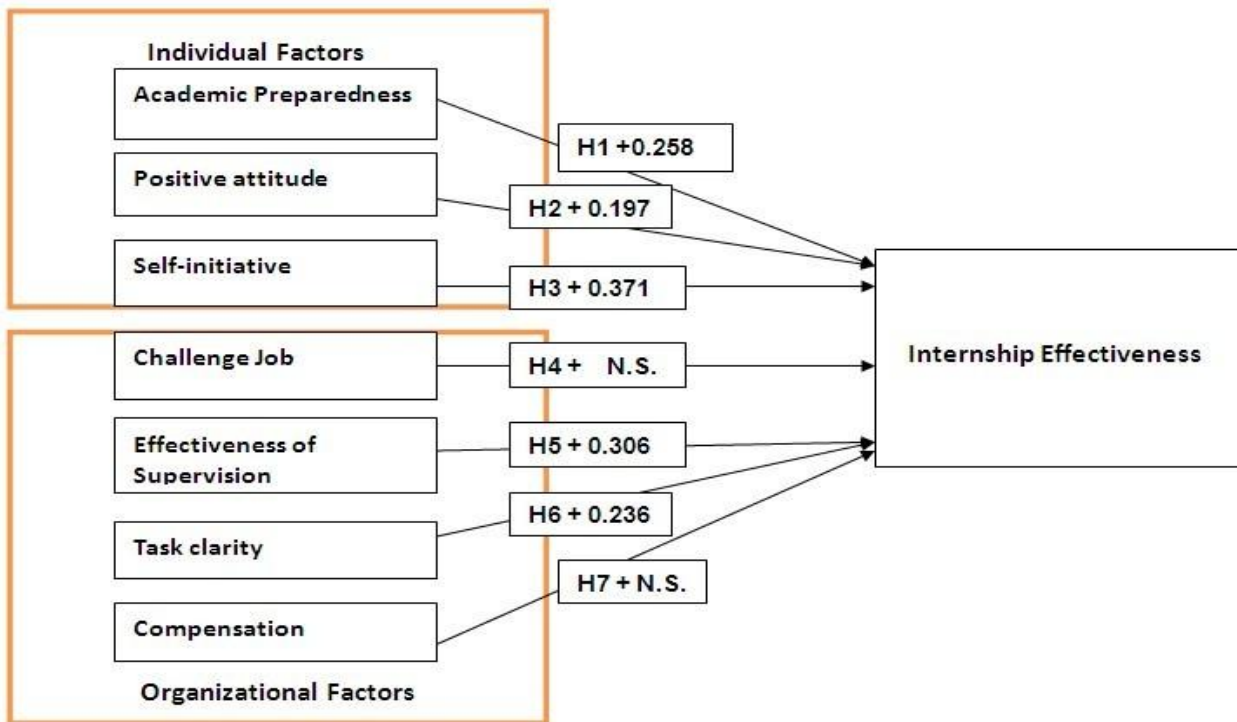
Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
AP	.223*		
PA	.170		
SI	.314**		
Compensation	.033		
CJ	.028		
ES	.124		
TC	.045	.428	12.096

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 3.4.4 Summary of Results

A summary presentation of results is presented as below:



Among the individual factors, Self-initiative ( $\beta=0.371$ ) was the strongest determinant of Internship Effectiveness, followed by Academic Preparedness ( $\beta=0.258$ ) and Positive Attitude ( $\beta=0.197$ ).

Among the organizational factors, Effectiveness of Supervision ( $\beta=0.306$ ) was a stronger determinant of Internship Effectiveness than Task Clarity ( $\beta=0.236$ ).

## PART FOUR: Discussion

### 4.1 Discussion and Implication

The result suggests that both the individual's attitude and the organization's internship structure and design influence the success of internship. In looking at which category of variables most strongly affects the internship outcome, the statistical result of the study suggests that individual factors play a dominating role.

According to the findings, academic preparedness made a major difference in determining internship effectiveness as suggested in previous studies (Basow & Byrne, 1993; Campbell & Kovar, 1994; Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999). Interns who possessed adequate skills and knowledge to perform in the internships were more likely to achieve internship success. It also indicates that background knowledge of the field or profession and academic skills may help interns obtain better result from the internship experience. However, the result does not indicate that GPA is a key factor to consider in the selection of student interns, even if previous studies show that students with high GPA had higher tendency to pursue an internship. (Callanan & Benzing, 2004) However, it may be more appropriate for organizations to select students with confidence about their academic preparation, which may facilitate their learning and development during the internship.

Positive attitude also had significant impact to internship effectiveness as suggested in previous studies (Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Basow & Byrne, 1993; Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999). This indicates that Interns who treated the internship as a real job and learning opportunity would be able to achieve better result than those who did not. This result suggests that students should be encouraged to establish a positive mentality for their internships, learn and behave as if they are working in real jobs. They are also advised to respect the norm of the company, for example, dress appropriately, be on time, and be at the worksite when they are scheduled to be there. (Beard & Morton, 1999)

Moreover, self-initiative was the most significant predictor to internship effectiveness. The result is consistent with previous studies (Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Beard, 1997; Beard & Morton, 1999). The internship effectiveness was higher when interns took great initiative to build rapport with other employees and ask for feedback. Therefore, it is most advisable for interns to take initiatives and be actively involved during internship, for example, they are encouraged to volunteer to help, ask questions, build relationships with colleagues and seek feedback from others.

In this study, challenge job did not play as great a role in determining the outcomes of the

internship experience, which is inconsistent with previous studies. (Hackman & Oldman, 1980; Taylor, 1988; Gabris & Mitchell, 1989; Rothman, 2007) However, the result may be due to the fact that there was little variance in the level of difficulty in student internships occurred in this study. As is shown in the result, interns were asked to perform similar entry level job regardless of their major study or the business nature of the company. Another noteworthy fact is that only 44.2% interns in the study perceived they were required to use complex or high level skills. In other words, most of them found their job simple, repetitive and not challenge enough.

Effectiveness of supervision was the strongest predictor among the organizational factors, which was supported by previous studies. (Taylor, 1988; Gabris & Mitchell, 1989) In fact, it may have compensated the lack of job challenge and motivated interns to develop their career skills and career focus during the programme. Therefore, it is possible for supervisors to enhance the internship outcome by considering the interests and goals of the intern and adapt them accordingly, provide assignments that increase learning opportunities, give constructive feedback and advices to improve the interns' performance.

Task clarity was another significant determinant for positive internship result as suggested in the previous study (Rothman, 2007). It helps to enhance internship effectiveness by outlining a clear plan about the job content and approaches to do the job. Student interns showed a deep appreciation of a "structured internship programme". On one hand, it shows the gesture that the company attaches importance of the programme and the development of interns. On the other, students can learn through a systematic training process instead of simply ad-hoc assignments, in this way, they can cultivate a sense of ownership of the programme and identify with the organizations better, thus making rapid progress in their learning and development.

Compensation including monetary payment and academic credit was not an evident factor in producing the successful internship outcomes as suggested in previous study (Basow & Byrne, 1993; Beard & Morton, 1999). It may due to the fact that during economic downturn,

many companies provide very low or even no compensation for interns. For instance, 58.4% of interns in this study have received a payment of HK\$1000 or lower, which resulted in small variance in compensation level. Another explanation is that the interns were well aware of the fact that none or low compensation would be provided in the programme, and those who were sensitive to monetary payment might have chosen to take part-time jobs instead of internships.

## **4.2 Application and Recommendations**

The implication of this study is that internship success is determined by both individual factors (e.g. academic preparedness, positive attitude, and self-initiative) and organizational factors (e.g. effectiveness of supervision and task clarity). Furthermore, the individual factors play a major role in influencing the successful outcome of internships.

University students, therefore, are encouraged to follow the advices below to make the most of their internships.

- 1) Be prepared before internship. Basic knowledge of the field and job will create better opportunities to apply theories from books or lectures, in which career skills can be developed and strengthened.
- 2) Be positive about the internship. Realistic expectations should be established to anticipate difficulties or even boredom. Internship should be treated as a potential learning opportunity and a real job.
- 3) Be proactive during the internship. Take the initiative to ask for tasks and questions and feedbacks. It is especially helpful when the supervisor does not provide adequate opportunities, since it becomes the only way to gain more meaningful understanding of work outside the monotonous tasks.

To testify the practical application of the findings, an organization interview was conducted

with Ms. April Chan, the company secretary in China Light and Power Holdings (CLP). As a part of the group-wide talent acquisition strategy, CLP Internship Programme was launched at 1998 with four major objectives:

- 1) To build a long-term partnership with tertiary institutions
- 2) To identify and nurture new talent to meet future resource requirement
- 3) To tap fresh value-added thinking from interns for immediate business needs
- 4) To fulfill corporate citizenship's role by providing practical work experience to university students that complements their academic learning.

When asked about the positive outcomes brought by the internship programme, Ms. Chan described it as “a win-win-win situation benefiting students, universities and the company”. On one hand, students could get a sample taste of the real business world and a preview of their aspiration. Most importantly, through their practices, they can gain feedback on their strengths and weaknesses to prepare for future challenges. Universities, on the other hand, can keep in touch with the changing business needs and may consider revamping the curriculum to align with expectations from employers. Last but not least, the company benefits from the innovative ideas injected by the “new blood”. It also regards the programme as an opportunity to identify and nurture future talents.

The internship programme in CLP is a successful example and a good case in point that emphasizes effectiveness of supervision and task clarity.

According to Ms. Chan, a mentoring system is one of the distinctive features of the CLP internship programme. Each intern is assigned a mentor, usually a senior manager or professional at the beginning of the programme. And the mentors will be responsible to guide, coach and evaluate the interns on their job performance and future career development. A two-way performance evaluation system is established for both the mentors and interns.



On one hand, the mentor appraises the interns' performance for future recruitment reference. On the other hand, the interns are requested to assess their mentor for future improvement of the programme. Evaluation criteria are discussed at the beginning of the internship.

Another feature of the programme is its systematic structure. The programme offers full-time training to students during summer vacation or on a 12-month basis. Each intern is involved in a specific project, in which job details and objectives will be provided and scheduled. Interns are well aware of what to achieve and area to improve. The available projects depend on business needs from year to year. For example, in 2009, the company had assigned projects in Corporate Secretarial, Human Resources, Electrical Engineering, etc. As Ms. Chan mentioned, "The Interns enjoyed participating in projects, it make them responsible for their input and proud of their output."

Furthermore, the CLP internship Programme is highly supported by the top management. A welcoming orientation will be held for all interns and an award ceremony for outstanding performers with the presence of top management. Compensation offered in the internships is depending on market rate and it is abundant for the regular dining and travelling expenses for the interns.

Based on the quantitative results and the case study of CLP, two recommendations are developed for the employers:

- 1) Provide sufficient supervisory support to intern to enhance career skills and career goals. Supervisors are encouraged to act as mentors. Constructive feedbacks are most valuable to student interns.
- 2) Develop a systematic plan of the internship programme. Ad-hoc tasks are not effective enough to give rise to internship success. In other words, organizations should hire interns only when there is a need and a plan. What they are fed up with is not challenges but boredom.

### **4.3 Limitations and Suggestions**

One of the limitations in this study is the history and maturation effect since there was a gap of time between the internship and survey. Some students took their internships when they were in the second year of study but the questionnaires were filled at their final year in the university. For future research, a longitudinal research design should be considered.

Another limitation is that the study relied heavily on the self-administered survey questionnaire which could be affected by different sources of errors. The control variables were not precise and all-rounded, for example, factors like firm size, gender of the supervisor and job nature are not included in current study. For future research, more external factors should be taken into consideration.

A third limitation is the generalizability of its results since the focus group and the questionnaire were completed by students from a single university. A sample size of 113 students, who mostly concentrated in business major, would not be sufficient to fully reflect the perceptions of university students in Hong Kong. For future research, a bigger and more diversified sample could be used.

Finally, some measurements of the variables might be controversial. For example, academic preparedness was measured through the perceived level of knowledge and skills, which might actually represent the respondents' confidence or career self-efficacy (Braswell & Cobia, 2000) instead of true academic ability. For one thing, cumulative GPA, another relatively objective indicator of academic performance, was not in a significant relationship with "academic preparedness". For another, cumulative GPA did not serve as significant predictor in this study. Therefore, it raised the doubt that the measurement for "academic preparedness" might not objectively reflect students' level of skills and knowledge. Another variable, the effectiveness of internship focused only on the benefits for the interns. However, a successful internship also brings benefits to the organizations and universities. Future research can redesign the measurement items and investigate other facets of internship effectiveness.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

It is widely accepted that internship can help to enhance graduates' employment opportunities. However, existing studies are mostly based on the benefits of internship to students and organizations but very few concerns about the predictors of internship success. In this study, multiple approaches were used to identify and evaluate the strength of the success factors of the internship effectiveness. A highlight in the result is that individual factors have more significant relationship with internship success than organizational factors, among which self-initiative acted as the strongest contributing factor, followed by academic preparedness and positive attitude of the intern. However, some of the organizational factors, namely effectiveness of supervision and task clarity, are both important in determining internship effectiveness. Based on the finding, students and organizations are facilitated to gain a better insight of the ingredients of internship success and therefore, to maximize the effectiveness of internship programme.

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## **Appendix A: Focus Group and Organization Interview Guiding Questions**

### **Guided questions for focus group discussion**

1. How do you think of internships?
2. Write down and rank the most important 5 ingredients of a successful internship.
3. Write down and rank the most important 5 benefits of a successful internship.
4. How internship experience affects your evaluation of the organization?
5. What suggestions you have for interns or the organizations to enhance the internship effectiveness?

### **Interview questions for CLP internship organizer-Ms. April Chan**

#### General information of the CLP internship

1. When did the company start to launch the internship programme
2. Main purpose
3. Intern recruitment source
4. Length of internship
5. Internship job content
6. Compensation for interns
7. Evaluation methods

#### Further probing questions

8. What characteristics do successful interns have? Which one do you think it's the most important?
9. What are the contributing factors of a successful internship? Which one do you think it's the most important?
10. What improvement the interns usually had after the internship?
11. What benefits do you think internship can bring to the organization?
12. What makes you think it's a successful internship programme?
13. What expectations you have for the future interns?
14. What improvements you would like to make in the internship programme?

## Appendix B: Internship Programme Survey Sample

Hello, my name is Phoebe Wen. I am a final year student majoring in human resources management at the Hong Kong Baptist University. This study is a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) Degree offered by Hong Kong Baptist University. The objective of the survey is to identify the key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an internship. Please kindly spare a few minutes to answer the following questions. The information you provide is of great importance to this study and will be used for academic purpose only. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Please read each statement carefully and answer the questions truthfully.**

1. Are you a university student in Hong Kong?

Yes  No (End of questionnaire)

2. Have you ever participated in an internship?

Yes  No (End of questionnaire)

### Part A: Assessment of predictors

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1= Strongly disagree      2= Disagree      3= Slightly disagree      4 = Undecided

5= Slightly agree      6= Agree      7= Strongly agree

In my internship,	
a) my college courses gave me the skills needed to perform well on the job.(AP01)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
b) I treated it like a real job.(AP02)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
c) I treated it like a potential learning opportunity.(PA01)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
d) I knew the good points and bad points of the job when I was hired.(PA02)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
e) I often volunteered for tasks.(PA03)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

f) I proactively asked questions.(PA04)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
g) I proactively got acquainted with other employees. (PA05)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
h) I proactively asked for feedback during internship. (PA06)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
i) I was required to use a number of complex or high level skills. (CJ01)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
j) the job was quite simple and repetitive. (CJ02)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
k) my supervisor considered my interests and goals and adapted the internship accordingly. (ES01)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
l) my supervisor provided assignments that gave me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills. (ES02)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
m) my supervisor gave me helpful feedback about my performance. (ES03)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
n) my supervisor gave me helpful advice about improving my performance when I need it. (ES04)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
o) I was given a clear plan about what assignments I have to do. (TC01)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
p) I was given a clear plan about how to do the assignments(TC02)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

## Part B: Assessment of criterions

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Undecided 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree

My internship prepared me exceptionally well in	
a) analytical skills(CS01)	1 2 3 4 5
b) computer applications(CS02)	1 2 3 4 5
c) creative thinking(CS03)	1 2 3 4 5
d) information search(CS04)	1 2 3 4 5
e) problem solving(CS05)	1 2 3 4 5
f) oral communication(CS06)	1 2 3 4 5
g) written communication(CS07)	1 2 3 4 5
h) proposal writing(CS08)	1 2 3 4 5

i) leadership skills( <b>CS09</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
j) teamwork( <b>CS10</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
k) relationship building( <b>CS11</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
<b>After the internship,</b>					
l) I know what kind of job fits me. ( <b>CF01</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
m) I just can't make up my mind what type of work I am suitable for. ( <b>CF02</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
n) I know my values well enough to make a career decision right now. ( <b>CF03</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
o) I have a real clear picture of what kind of person I am. ( <b>CF04</b> )	1	2	3	4	5
p) I just don't know if I have the traits that some kinds of work require. ( <b>CF01</b> )	1	2	3	4	5

### Part C. Personal Information

The following information is needed to analyze the results.

a. Major of study

- Arts            Business (Please specify :\_\_\_\_\_)            Communication  
Education        Engineering    Law    Medicine    Science Social Science  
Others\_\_\_\_\_

b. Gender

- Male            Female

c. Current study year

- Foundation        Year 1            Year 2            Year 3            Year 4 or  
 above

d. Cumulative GPA

- 2.0-2.19        2.20-2.49        2.50-2.99        3.00-3.39        3.40-4.00

e. Length of internship

120 hours (during semester)       1-2 months       2-3 months       4months or above

f. Business nature of the company in which you take internship

Business Services     Community, Social & Personal Services     Construction  
 Education     Electricity, Gas & Steam     Engineering, Architectural and Technical Services  
 Financial Institution     Government     Hospitality & Tourism Services  
 Insurance       Manufacturing     Trading     Real Estate     Transport, Storage and Communication  
 Others(Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

g. Is the job nature related to your major of study?

Yes, they are related.       No, they are not related at all.

h. Did you receive academic credits for the internship?

Yes, I did.       No, I did not.

i. Compensation during internship(HK dollars)

\$0-\$1000/month     \$1001-\$2000/month     \$2001-\$3000/month  
 \$3001-\$4000/month     \$4001-\$5000/month       \$5001/month or above

Please check to ensure that you have answered all the questions.  
Thank you for your patience and time in completing the questionnaire.

**End of Questionnaire**

## Appendix C Demographics Statistics and Focus Group Finding

**Table 1 Demographics Characteristics of Focus Group Samples (N=18)**

<b>Demographics Characteristics of Focus Group Sample (N=18)</b>		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	8	44
Female	10	56
	18	100
<b>Major of Study</b>		
Accounting	3	17
China Business Studies	2	11
Economics	1	6
Finance	2	11
Human Resources Management	6	33
Information System Management	1	6
Marketing	3	17
	18	100
<b>Business nature of the companies in which internships were taken</b>		
Business Service	3	17
Community, Social & Personal Services	1	6
Engineering, Architectural and Technical Services	1	6
Financial Institution	5	28
Government	1	6
Hospitality & Tourism Service	2	11
Real Estate	1	6
Trading	3	17
Transport, Storage and Communication	1	6
	18	100
<b>Length of Internship</b>		
120 hours(during semester)	3	17
1-2 months	5	28
2-3 months	10	56
	18	100
<b>Internship related to Study Major</b>		
Received Academic Credit	3	17

**Table2 Demographics Characteristics of Survey Samples (N=113)**

<b>Demographics Characteristics of Survey Sample (N=113)</b>		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48	42.5
Female	65	57.5
	113	100
<b>Major of Study</b>		
Arts	5	4.4
Business	79	69.9
Communication	4	3.5
Education	3	2.7
Science	20	17.7
Social Science	2	1.8
	113	100
<b>Current study year</b>		
Foundation	3	2.7
Year1	9	8.0
Year2	7	6.2
Year3	94	83.2
	113	100
<b>Cumulative GPA</b>		
2.0-2.19	5	4.4
2.20-2.49	8	7.1
2.5-2.99	27	23.9
3.00-3.39	44	38.9
3.40-4.00	29	25.7
	113	100
<b>Length of internship</b>		
120hours	14	12.4
1-2months	38	33.6
2-3months	40	35.4
4months or above	21	18.6
	113	100.0



<b>Business nature</b>		
Business Services	26	23.0
Community, Social & Personal Services	8	7.1
Construction	2	1.8
Education	12	10.6
Engineering, Architectural and Technical Services	4	3.5
Financial Institution	18	15.9
Government	11	9.7
Hospitality & Tourism Services	3	2.7
Insurance	1	.9
Manufacturing	6	5.3
Trading	5	4.4
Real Estate	11	9.7
Transport, Storage and Communication	5	4.4
Others	1	.9
	113	100
<b>Internship related to Study Major</b>	82	72.6
<b>Received Academic Credit</b>	45	39.8
<b>Compensation(\$&gt;1000)</b>	47	41.6

**Table 3 Summary of Responses from 3 Focus Group (N=18)**

Guiding questions	Responses	Coding
1. How do you think of internships?	Beneficial experience which bridges the gap between university and the workplace	Overall beneficial and effective
	Important way to gain working experience	
	Encountered negative feels but an useful way to learn	
	Could be tough/stressful but worthy	
	Required to get a job after graduation	
	Channel to enter the professional world	
	Boring but necessary	Beneficial but not effective
	Beneficial but the internship was not well organized/planned	
	Got to know the workplace but felt like a low cost labor	

	Just a way to kill time during vocations	Neutral
	Normal routine did not help learning new skills	Not beneficial
2. Write down and rank the most important 5 ingredients of a successful internship	Prior knowledge/skills generated in the university	Academic preparedness
	Related major/field of study	
	Proactive attitude of interns	Self-initiative
	Treated internship as a learning process	Positive attitude
	Determination to fulfill tedious/monotonous/challenging tasks	
	Realistic expectations towards the internship	
	Career mentors	Mentor
	Regular feedback and support from supervisor	Support from supervisors/colleagues
	Support and help from colleagues	
	Feeling respected and welcomed	
	Being included as a part of organization	
	Chance to take substantial responsibility	Challenge task
	Chance to complete a whole task	
	An well-organized plan for internship	Task role clarity
	Clear task assignment	
3. Write down and rank the most important 5 benefits of a successful internship	Gained knowledge of the industry	Knowledge about the world of work
	Gained knowledge of the job	
	Gained knowledge of operation/norms of the workplace	
	Learned how to work with others	Career skills
	Enhanced communication skills	
	Enhanced interpersonal skills	
	Enhanced computer skills	
	Enhanced research skills	
	Enhanced confidence	
	Learned how to cope with difficulties	
	Applied learning from university courses	Reality check
	Enhanced adaptability to new environment	
	Built up relationship with professionals	Relationship building
	Built up relationship with other interns/clients	
	Solved confusion about career choices	Career focus
	Knew potential challenges of a certain job	
	Inspired by role model in the company	
	Being encouraged to think about the future career	
	Became more sophisticated in career values	
	Knew career decision better	
Enriched CV with a working experience/company brand	Practical benefits	

	Acquired reference letter	
	Received monetary compensation	
4. How internship experience affects your evaluation of the organization	Positive perceptions of the company due to warm welcoming/tea time/birthday party/lunch with colleagues	Sense of belonging
	Negative perceptions of the company due to indifference/exclusion of interns	
	Negative perceptions of the company due to operation inefficiency	Company environment
	Negative perceptions of the company due to conflicts among colleagues	
	Positive perceptions of the company due to strong organization culture	
	Positive perceptions of the company due to reasonable compensation	Compensation
	Positive perceptions of the company due to briefing/sharing/feedback sessions for interns	Organization of the internship programme
	Negative perceptions of the company due to poor planning of internship	
5. What suggestions you have for interns or the organizations to enhance the internship effectiveness?	Internship programme should be well planned, including a systematic training	Systematic planning of internship
	Organizations should enhance time management, fulltime internship is more beneficial than part-time internship	
	Organizations should hire interns only when it is needed and prepared	
	Organizations should hire interns only when it is going to provide learning opportunities	
	Supervisors should provide timely feedback	Supervisory support
	Organizations should value its interns	
	Payment should be standard among interns	Reasonable compensation
	Organizations should provide reasonable benefits for interns	
	Job description should be clear enough for the interns to have to establish realistic expectations of the internship.	Clear expectation
	Interns should be more proactive	Self-initiative
Job nature of the internship should be related to interns' study majors	Proper job-major match	

**Table 4 Comments on Internship Experience from Focus Groups (N=18)**

Rank	Comments	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1	Overall beneficial but not effective	8	44%	Got to know the workplace but felt like a low cost labor
2	Overall beneficial and effective	6	33%	Beneficial experience which bridges the gap between university and the workplace
3	Netural	2	11%	Just a way to kill time during vocations
4	Not beneficial	2	11%	Normal routine did not help learning new skills
	Total	18	100%	

**Table 5 Ingredients of Successful Internship from Focus Groups (N=18)**

Rank	Ingredients	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1	Support from supervisors/colleagues	5	28%	Regular feedback and support from supervisor
2	Task clarity	4	22%	Clear task assignment
3	Challenge tasks	3	17%	Chance to take substantial responsibility
4	Proactive attitude	2	11%	Self-initiative of interns
5	Academic preparedness	2	11%	Prior knowledge/skills generated in the university
6	Positive attitude	1	6%	Determination to fulfill tedious/monotonous/challenging tasks
7	Mentor	1	6%	Career mentors
	Total	18	100%	

**Table 6 Benefits of Successful Internship from Focus Groups (N=18)**

Rank	Benefits	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1	Knowledge about the world of work	5	28%	Gained knowledge of operation/norms of the workplace
2	Career skills	4	22%	Enhanced interpersonal skills

3	Career focus	3	17%	Solved confusion about career choices
4	Relationship building	3	17%	Built up relationship with professionals
5	Practical benefits	2	11%	Acquired reference letter
6	Reality check	1	6%	Applied learning from university courses
	Total	18	100%	

**Table 7 Factors that Affect Evaluation of Company during Internship from Focus Groups (N=18)**

Rank	Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1	Company environment	7	39%	Negative perceptions of the company due to operation inefficiency
2	Organization of the internship programme	5	28%	Positive perceptions of the company due to briefing/sharing/feedback sessions for interns
3	Sense of belonging	5	28%	Positive perceptions of the company due to warm welcoming/tea time/birthday party/lunch with colleagues
4	Compensation	1	6%	Positive perceptions of the company due to reasonable compensation
	Total	18	100%	

**Table 8 Suggestions to enhance Internship Effectiveness from Focus Groups (N=18)**

Rank	Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1	Systematic planning of internship	6	33%	Time management, fulltime internship is more beneficial than part-time internship
2	Supervisory support	5	28%	Supervisors should provide timely feedback.

3	Clear expectations	3	17%	Job description should be clear enough for the interns to have to establish realistic expectation of the internship.
4	Self-initiative	2	11%	Interns should be more proactive
5	Reasonable compensation	1	6%	Provide reasonable benefits for interns
6	Proper job match	1	6%	Job nature of the internship should be related to interns' study majors
	Total	18	100%	

## Appendix D: Correlation Analysis

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Zero-order Correlations (N=113)**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.Major of study(a)	3.23	2.44															
2.Gender(b)	.56	.50	.100														
3.Current study year(c)	3.70	.73	.066	-.003													
4.Cumulative GPA(d)	3.74	1.06	-.001	.188 *	.113												
5.Length of internship(e)	2.60	.93	-.102	-.147	.060	.022											
6.Business nature(f)	6.42	4.43	.061	-.113	.055	-.104	-.072										
7.Related to major(g)	.28	.47	.057	.127	.064	-.001	-.109	.142									
8.Academic credits(h)	.60	.49	.215*	.069	.069	.040	.011	.098	.257 **								
9.Compensation(i)	2.73	1.83	.034	.038	.101	-.137	.230*	.098	.157	.194 *							
10.AP	3.23	2.44	-.265**	.079	-.021	.069	.072	-.023	-.108	-.014	-.113						
11.PA	.58	.50	.034	.113	-.013	.221*	.063	.074	-.036	-.009	-.084	.353**					
12.SI	3.70	.73	-.036	.062	-.111	.097	.125	.022	.023	-.064	-.023	.458**	.515**				
13.CJ	3.74	1.06	.074	.271**	.019	.066	.025	-.016	.255**	.055	.048	.253**	.141	.333**			
14.ES	2.60	.93	-.077	.093	-.060	-.068	.123	.066	.023	-.004	.057	.391**	.367**	.468**	.187*		
15.TC	6.42	4.43	-.107	.111	-.058	.017	.055	.077	.137	.013	.131	.402**	.426**	.481**	.405**	.522**	
16.IE	.28	.47	-.153	.072	-.004	.054	.162	-.046	-.127	.051	.014	.537**	.467**	.578**	.223*	.456**	.425**

**Note:**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(a)1=Arts,2=Business,3=Communication,4=Education,5=Engineer,6=Law,7=Medicine,8=Science,9=Social Science,others=10

(b) 0=Male, 1=Female

(c) 1=Foundation, 2=Year 1, 3=Year 2, 4=Year3, 5=Year 4 or above

(d) 1=2.00-2.19,2=2.20-2.49,3=2.50-2.99,4=3.00-3.39,5=3.40-4.00

(e) 1=120hours (during semester), 2=1-2months, 3=2-3months, 4=4months or above

(f) 1=Business Services ,2=Community, Social & Personal Services ,3=Construction ,4=Education ,5=Electricity, Gas & Steam ,6=Engineering, Architectural and Technical Services ,7=Financial Institution,8=Government,9=Hospitality & Tourism Services,10=Insurance ,11=Manufacturing, 12=Trading, 13=Real Estate ,14=Transport, Storage and Communication, Others=15

(g) 0=Yes, they are related, 1=No, they are not related at all

(h) 0=Yes, I did. 1=No, I did not.

(i) 1=\$0-\$1000/month,2=\$1001-\$2000/month ,3=\$2001-\$3000/month ,4=\$3001-\$4000/month,5=\$4001-\$5000/month,6= \$5001/month or above

AP=Academic Preparedness

PA=Positive Attitude

SI=Self-initiative

CJ=Challenge Job

ES=Effectiveness of Supervision

TC=Task Clarity

IE=Internship Effectiveness



## Appendix E: Extractions from the Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Table 1 Regression Result of Individual Factors

Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
AP	.258**		
PA	.197*		
SI	.371**	.411	27.271

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 Regression Result of Organizational Factors

Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
Compensation	-.041		
CJ	.117		
ES	.306**		
TC	.236*	.252	9.444

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 Overall Regression Result

Variables	Internship Effectiveness		
	Beta	R Square Change	F Change
<b>Step 1</b>			
Major of study	-.166		
Gender	.116		
Current study year	-.003		
Cumulative GPA	.024		
Length of internship	.144		
Business nature	-.001		
Related to major	-.145		
Academic credits	.114		
<b>Step 2</b>			
AP	.223*		
PA	.170		
SI	.314**		
Compensation	.033		
CJ	.028		
ES	.124		
TC	.045	.428	12.096

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).