

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE OR HYBRID COURSE FOR BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION INTERNSHIPS

by Margaret Arrison Nolan, Arcadia University School of Global Business

*nolanm@arcadia.edu
Extended Abstract
Experiential Track*

ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education often require their business administration majors to complete an internship as part of the curriculum (Wheeler and Waite, 2021). Internships provide undergraduate students with opportunities to gain practical work experience through the application of the knowledge gained in the classroom (Wheeler and Waite, 2021). In the spring of 2020, many traditional in-person business internships shifted to remote work environments due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, instructors were required to adapt their internship courses to an online or hybrid modality. The purpose of this extended abstract is to provide a model of pedagogical best practices for teaching a business administration internship course in an online or hybrid learning format.

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education were deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many temporarily closed their campuses and/or moved class instructions to online teaching modalities. Faculty were required to shift their pedagogy to online learning management platforms and conduct virtual classes through video conferencing technology (Wheeler & Waite, 2021). Businesses across industries were also affected by COVID-19, causing them to shift their traditional in-person internship programs to fully remote or virtual experiences. This shift created a critical demand for instructors teaching business administration internship courses to adapt their courses into an online or hybrid format to meet the changing needs of university stakeholders such as students and employers (Velez & Giner, 2015). This paper describes a business administration internship course developed by the author that utilizes a variety of pedagogical methods to foster a meaningful, valuable internship experience, taught in an online learning platform.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION INTERNSHIP COURSE

The business administration internship course (BAIC) described in this paper is rooted in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through experiences and reflection (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). While BAIC focuses primarily on the work component of a student's internship experience, the course integrates career-oriented pedagogy, such as professional networking, interviewing skills, and developing a professional identity. BAIC is a full-semester, 4-credit course required of junior or senior business administration or accounting majors. Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours working with an employer, along with several online assignments (Appendix A). The online component includes a series of written reflections, readings, videos, career-oriented activities, individual instructor meetings, student presentations, and virtual class meetings. As Clark (2003) noted, internships can be valuable learning experiences when practical and reflective components are part of the internship experience. Through this coupling, students can "learn to understand themselves, their jobs, and their internship context, and where they increase their employability" (Clark, 2003, p. 481).

The overarching goal of BAIC is to ensure that students' internships provide meaningful opportunities where they can apply the knowledge they have acquired throughout their degree program, develop skills and abilities in a professional work environment, and prepare for transition into a career after graduation. The course objectives include:

Provide the student with an opportunity to experience practical applications of their classroom study in the business environment

- Foster a positive work ethic and develop time management, communication and other necessary skills for working in a professional environment
- Prepare the student for making the transition from business student to business practitioner
- Strengthen the student's professional networking skills to meet future career goals
- Expose the student to professionals in various industries

Prior to beginning the course, students are responsible for finding and securing their own internships. This responsibility helps develop their career search skills and abilities. The instructor shares resources for identifying legitimate internships, offers networking tips, and provides information on internships held by previous students. Once an internship is secured, students work closely with their supervisor during the first week to complete a Work Plan that aligns the work activities and responsibilities with the objectives of BAIC. This process enables both parties to establish a clear path for communication and understanding of the internship requirements.

BAIC MODULES

BAIC utilizes the Canvas online learning management platform but can be adapted for any online learning management platform. BAIC can be taught in either the fully online or hybrid modality, making it suitable to fit with the changing landscape of business administration internships. Full course requirements are located in Appendix A. The course is organized into four modules, each with its own topics, learning objectives, readings, videos, written reflection, and career-oriented activities. As students engage in learning through reflection, they develop “strategies for action that can be applied in their ongoing learning process” (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, p. 27). Students are able to work at their own pace, with each module connected to their completed work hours. The modules are organized according to following general topics:

- Making the Most of Internship and Professionalism in the Workplace
- Developing your Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
- Career Search Strategies, Interviewing Skills, and Professional Networking
- Preparing to Transition from College to Career

Each module contains the following pedagogical methods designed to create a robust experiential learning process:

- Instructor-recorded lectures
- Readings and videos
- Written reflections with varying prompts to encourage critical thinking and synthesis of student’s internship experience, readings/videos, and career preparation
- Participation in a career-oriented activity, networking opportunity, or business departments’ professional speaker event.

Students also submit a final paper and a written evaluation completed by their supervisor. The course concludes with a full-class virtual session where students give presentations about their internships.

CONCLUSION

While instructors continue to face pedagogical challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BAIC provides a model of best practices and innovative pedagogy for teaching a business administration internship course in an online learning management platform. BAIC fosters an experiential learning environment in which students build rich and meaningful understandings of content through active engagement with their environment and guided reflection on these experiences (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Merging the practical application of the work aspect of an internship with the reflective component of experiential learning theory provides deeper, more meaningful connections to a business program (Clark, 2003). Incorporating career-oriented pedagogy into the course material allows students to hone their knowledge, skills, and abilities, while preparing them for a successful transition into professional careers. Feedback received by BAIC students to date has been positive. The author recommends that conducting a formal research study would provide valuable insight into this experiential learning pedagogical model.

REFERENCES

- Clark, S. C. (2003). Enhancing the educational value of business internships. *Journal of Management Education, 27*(4), 472-484.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (1)* NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kolb, A. and Kolb, D. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in high education. *A Journal for Engaged Educators, 1*(1), 7-44.
- Sanahuja Vélez, G. and Ribes Giner, G. (2015), Effects of Business Internships on Students, Employers, and Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 52*: 121-130. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joec.12010>
- Slavich, G. M., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2012). Transformational teaching: Theoretical underpinnings, basic principles, and core methods. *Educational psychology review, 24*(4), 569-608.
- Wheeler, D. A., & Waite, B. C. (2021). Internship alternatives: Solutions for the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *Teaching Public Administration, 014473942111042855*.

APPENDIX A: BAIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS (DEVELOPED BY DR. MARGARET ARRISON NOLAN, ED.D., M.S.)

To fulfill this course, the student must meet all of the following requirements:

- Complete at least 100 hours of documented work on your internship project(s)/location
- Submit an internship information form (*prior to beginning the internship for approval*)
- Submit a work plan signed by the student and the supervisor of your internship work (*completed during 1st week of internship or earlier*)
- Submit series of written reflections (*approximately 4 reflections throughout the semester*)
- Conduct an informational interview with a key person at your internship site
- Create a LinkedIn Profile
- Participate in individual meetings with professor throughout the semester. (Zoom or in-person).
- Participate in introductory class meeting and final presentation meetings (Zoom).
- Attend at least one SGB Professional Speaker Event
- Participate in one or more networking/career preparation activities sponsored through the university's Office of Career Education (OCE).
- Complete a resume review and mock interview with OCE
- Give a final presentation to your classmates at end of your internship (zoom)
- *Submit a final paper* (synthesize your experience with learning outcomes & lessons learned)
- Submit a signed evaluation by the supervisor of your internship work
- Submit a log of hours (100 minimum requirement) signed by supervisor

Complete other assignments as requested by instructor via canvas