

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS: DESIGN AND EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This article describes an international internship program. It also provides student views concerning the internship experience. Finally, it notes some concerns about the program that are currently being assessed.

INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of literature discussing the experiential learning nature of internships. In fact, the Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning Bernie Keys Library has 61 articles that have the word internship in the title. It is also the case that in recent years there have been calls from business executives and academics for students to engage in learning that makes them more aware of international issues. It is clear, therefore, that international internship experiences offer the potential to meet two important aspects for student learning.

For over 50 years Arcadia University through its Center for Education Abroad has offered students enrolled in US colleges and universities the opportunity to study abroad; for more than 25 of those years it has offered international internship opportunities in London. In response to a 2001 Request for Proposal (RFP) from a number of US sending institutions, Arcadia University modified its internship program in London. The changes were implemented during the Fall 2003 semester.

During the Fall 2004 semester, the author, as part of his sabbatical, served as a consultant to the Arcadia University Center for Education Abroad to review the new program. He had the opportunity to go through the first few weeks of the internship program in London with the students. He attended the lectures; set in on meetings between the Internship Coordinators and students and between the Academic Supervisors and students; met with the Arcadia University London staff involved in the internship program, the staff involved with the London Humanities Program, and the staff who work with the students at City University of London; attended classes; and spoke to the students who were participating in the program. He joined the students during their second week, after they had done their home stay. He also had the opportunity to review the reports of the students who had participated in the program in Summer 2004¹, Spring 2004, and Fall 2003. This article uses the authors experience to describe the old and new internship programs and the changes made to the program. It also provides feedback from students who participated in the internship program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION²

Prior to Fall 2003 the Arcadia University London Internship Program consisted of the work experience, which included an academic project, and two college-level courses. The work experience was three days per week, eight hours per day, for 12 weeks and when combined with the project generated eight semester credit hours under the US semester credit system. The two courses were each worth four US semester academic credits, so when combined with the internship experience and project, students received 16 US academic credits. The students select their two courses from those offered through the Arcadia University London Humanities Program and/or from the offerings from City University of London. The University, which can trace its origins back to 1894 but took the name City University of London in 1966, offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. The offerings of City University of London are quite broad and include undergraduate programs in arts, business and management, computing, engineering and mathematical sciences, health sciences, law, and social sciences. Each of these program areas also has many subdivisions (e.g., journalism, music, economics, accountancy, sociology, etc.). Thus, depending on what the sending institution will permit it is possible for students to take courses that satisfy general education or major requirements, as well as electives.

In 2001 the Arcadia University Center for Education Abroad responded to a Request for Proposal (RFP) from a consortium of Directors for Study Abroad at 12 large US educational institutions that were looking for international internship opportunities for their students. The consortium liked the general structure of the existing Arcadia University London Internship Program, however, a number of the schools indicated that they would not grant credit for "work experience" and, therefore, saw granting eight US academic credits for the internship, even with the project, as too rich. With some minor modifications they saw the project as an acceptable academic component of the work experience and felt that together they could warrant four US academic credits. This meant that the students would need to take three other courses rather than two as had been the case in the past. While it would have been possible to have the students select an additional course from the offerings of the City University of London or the Arcadia University London Humanities Program, it was decided that a better approach would be to design a new course that had a relationship to the internship experience.

EXHIBIT 1

LI321 - WORKING IN THE UK AND EC COURSE TOPICS

Week 1:

- (1) British Politics by a Parliamentary Political Panel
- (2) The Learning Environment in the UK
- (3) An Introduction to the British Social and Family Structure

Week 2:

- (1) Introduction to the European Union and Current Political Issues Involving Britain and the EU
- (2) UK Politics and Attitudes towards the EU and the UK
- (3) Higher and Professional Education in Europe: the Framework of Qualifications
- (4) British Art and Culture

Weeks 3 -10

- (1) How Firms are Organized
- (2) Management Styles
- (3) Motivation in the Workplace
- (4) Changing Patterns of Work and the Regulation of Employment
- (5) Trade Unions and Industrial Relations
- (6) Cultural Diversity in the Workplace
- (7) Business Ethics and Social Responsibility
- (8) European Mobility and Immigration

The new course, LI321-Working in the UK and the EC: the Politics, Sociology, and Public Policy of Business and the Professions, consists of lectures, discussions, and workshop sessions that are scheduled throughout the semester. Exhibit 1 provides a brief summary of the course topics covered in LI321 for Fall 2004. As can be seen from Exhibit 1 the first few weeks (1 and 2) of the course are designed to provide students with a context for their work experience while the later weeks (3 through 11) deal with business theories, related to organizational behavior and topics. All week 1 and 2 sessions are three hours in duration and lecture/discussion format. There are reading assignments for all of the sessions and there is an examination on the lectures at the end of second week. Since the internship experience and other classes have not yet started, the classes are held during the day. The final part of the first week involves a three-day home stay with a British family. The sessions for weeks 3 through 11 are held on Wednesday evenings with week 11 being used for the final examination. The sessions are scheduled for three hours and involve lecture and group case analysis activities.

The modification to the LI311- Work in Thought and Action course was mainly in terms of the length of the paper which was defined as a minimum of 7,500 words (about 25 pages). Since this course is such an integral part of the internship experience it is described here in more detail:

.... LI311 Work in Thought and Action consists of the individually advised and supervised academic project – a major piece of independent research each intern is required to

develop, submit, present and defend at the end of the semester. Students meet with their academic supervisors (faculty members who guide the preparation of the academic projects) on a regular basis throughout the semester to discuss strategies for success as independent researchers (who must produce a significant academic project). In addition to these seminars, students may schedule time during the final two weeks of the program for individual or small group discussions about project preparation and presentation. Students also meet with their internship coordinators to discuss individual problems, challenges and opportunities they are discovering in their workplace settings, and as would-be professionals in a real UK/European workplace setting.

As can be seen from the description the focus of this course is on the academic project. The students are provided detailed guidelines for doing the project. It may also be useful for the reader to know how this course is graded. The Internship Coordinator and the Academic Supervisor have final responsibility for the grade which is based upon the following factors:

1. Written report evaluated by Internship Coordinator and the Academic Supervisor
2. Thirty minute presentation evaluated by Internship Coordinator and the Academic Supervisor
3. Grade from employment supervisor

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4. Factors based on meetings with Internship Coordinator and the Academic Supervisor

The two internship related courses indicate what the students must do to receive course credit; however, to fully appreciate what is involved in the total experience, it is important to think about the complete process in which the student engages. Given that the internship is a different type of learning experience many people are involved in the process. At the student's home institution the student will typically work with various staff from the major department, particularly the academic advisor, and the staff from the study abroad office. Next, the student will send the application to the Arcadia University Center for Education Abroad office in Glenside, PA. The application is reviewed and, based upon subject area, grade point average, and recommendations it is determined whether the student is eligible to participate in the program. If the student is approved the application is forwarded to the Arcadia University Center for Education Abroad office in London. The London office staff review the materials and, based upon the students background and interests, identify the person who will serve as the Internship Coordinator and the person who will serve as the Academic Supervisor. The Internship Coordinator is an independent consultant who is responsible for working with the employers to obtain the work site for the student, whereas, the Academic Supervisor is a faculty member with an educational institution in London who works with the student on the project. After arriving in London the student must still interview at the selected work site in order to finalize the placement. Given that it is frequently the case that the student must go back and forth between the various individuals and offices the process becomes quite complex and time consuming for the student.

STUDENT FEEDBACK CONCERNING THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The author asked three students to provide comments concerning the program. Their comments are presented in this section.

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP BY CARL WHITLOCK

I graduated from Arcadia University in 2004 earning a BA in Business Administration with an emphasis in Finance. During the Fall semester of my senior year I participated in the Arcadia University London Internship Program. In addition to my internship work with Friedman Billings and Ramsey International, I attended City University in London and took two business elective courses involving financial markets and financial derivatives.

I chose to intern with an investment bank, due to my deep interest in finance. I was placed with a boutique investment bank called Friedman Billings and Ramsey

International (FBR) in the fall of 2003. FBR is headquartered in Washington DC and the London office acts as the Western European branch to investment banking as well as trading. While working for FBR, I got the rare privilege to work both on the investment banking side and the trading side. My supervisor on the investment banking side was Louise Tox, the Director of Investment Banking. On the trading side my supervisor was Christian Falster, the Vice President of Scandinavian Equities.

The first half of each workday was spent researching companies for the investment banking side, using Bloomberg Terminals, financial information sites, and other Internet searching tools. Once information was gathered I would pass it along to the investment bankers who would then add it to reports. When the reports were completed I would prepare final copies, printing and binding each one. The latter half of each day was spent with the traders. At 12:30 everyday we sat down to a videoconference linking London, NYC, DC and San Francisco during which analysts would talk about key stocks to trade and what variable would be affecting the markets. I would compile reports on a handful of the equities mentioned in the meeting and email the reports to clients of the traders. I would also help research equities and send information to the traders as well as their clients. As an intern I also had to get coffee and run other sorts of mundane errands, as well as organize files and other tedious office jobs.

An exciting and challenging aspect on the trading side was working with people from many different countries. Of the fourteen or so traders on the trading floor, only three were English: the rest came from Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, Italy, United Arab Emirates and the U.S. The ability to work with so many people from so many different countries and cultures was probably the greatest experience on the job. I had to learn to work within different parameters for each one. For example if someone asked for research on an equity, depending on who it was and where they came from, it should have been done five minutes ago or they weren't ready for it so soon. Another great thing I learned to do was multitasking. It sounds cliché, but it was the only way to survive in this environment. Even though I tried my best to split my day in half with both the investment banking and trading side, it never quite worked out that way. Somehow each day I found myself researching something for the investment banking side (a slow, almost laid back approach to analyzing financial data) and at the same time trying to juggle requests from traders wanting information immediately (because time is money). I also gained knowledge of just how a front office of an investment bank operates and the pressures it takes to succeed while working for one.

For my academic project I wrote a thirty-page report documenting the uses of futures markets. The main topic that I covered was about John Poindexter's need for a terrorist futures market to predict when a terrorist even would take place. Due to the accurate movements of futures

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markets as great indicators of future events, I talked about how such a market could benefit and hurt the ability to fight terrorism effectively. I wrote it in a way that the everyday citizen could understand at the most basic level how such a system would work. When I handed in the paper, I had to do a presentation and discuss it with two professors, one an economics professor and the other an interior design professor. The majority of the time was spent discussing what a futures market does.

Having course work along with the work experience and the academic project created a heavy workload. The Wednesday night class was a bit much mainly due to exhaustion of students coming straight from work or other class. I enjoyed the class lectures on business and topics effecting business in the EU, but for those internship students who were not business majors they were put to sleep. If the examinations were easier and the class itself was shorter, it would help out a lot. The internship itself at FBR was incredible and I highly recommend it to those seeking an investment banking or financial internship. The supervisors were reasonable in their demands and everyone there was extremely helpful. As far as external courses, do not take anything over level two and do not take more than two courses unless it is truly necessary. Both courses I took were extremely advanced. I had no prior prerequisites that could have prepared me for the technicality of the courses and had a very difficult time keeping up with both. My advice to future study abroad students: stick with level two courses in London. The project should be limited to 20 pages and there should be a ten-minute oral presentation in front of the other internship students as well as the professors. The project takes a good deal of the semester to come up with and the weekly classes should be used more to structure the project more efficiently.

TRANSATLANTIC MOMENTS BY TREVOR ALLEN

I graduated from Arcadia University, August 2004. My major was in business administration with an emphasis in finance and a minor in economics. Since I have a strong interest in politics, I also carried overloads in order to take more political science courses. Given my major and my interest in political science, Dr. Biggs recommended that I do my internship with a member of British Parliament.

My internship took place in London during the summer of 2004, from June 1 to July 27. I worked for the Right Honorable Member Barry Sheerman, a Labour M.P. for Huddersfield. Huddersfield is located in northern Britain, although my time was entirely spent in London.

Barry Sheerman founded Networking for Industry (NFI) in 1994. NFI is an umbrella organization that contains the following four groups: the Associate Parliamentary Health Group (APHG), the Associate Parliamentary Group for Design and Innovation, the Associate Parliamentary Manufacturing Industry Group, and the Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Waste Group. I

worked for the APHG under the guise of Chris Pickard who was the Director of the group.

My days were always different, calling on me to use different skill sets. Some days I was responsible for posting all 663 members of parliament, other days I would make over one hundred phone calls to various members of Parliament, the House of Lords, and members of industry. I wrote proposals ranging from office realignment to information technology needs, and in addition, I wrote letters to parliamentarians, drafted exerts for the APHG website and composed speaker notes for meetings.

Once a week I would also help to organize and run a meeting between Parliamentarians and the hospital trusts in their constituencies. These meetings would typically consist of three two-hour segments with lunch and breaks in between. At these meetings, I would be responsible for compiling a list of all attendees, recording minutes, and circulating amongst the Parliamentarians and top-level managers of the hospital trusts.

My academic project looked into how obesity was damaging the U.K physically, emotionally, and financially. In addition, my paper provided causes for obesity, remedies to prevent and reverse obesity, and guidelines for government intervention. This project related to the field in which I was working for the MP Sheerman, but not to my day-to-day activities.

At the end of my internship I had two job offers. The first was to stay on and become a fulltime employee with APHG. The second offer was to work for an associated group called Partnership Source Limited. Both firms were looking for an associate who would agree to a long-term commitment. I had already accepted a position with the Peace Corps, so I was unable to accept either of these opportunities.

The director of our internship program in Britain was Dr. Mignuolo. He took us to Brussels to see the home of the European Parliament, to Waterloo, and to Aachen, in northern Germany, to see the final resting place of Charlemagne. At Waterloo, he regaled us with tales of Napoleon's rise and fall. The most amazing part was his, literal, hour-by-hour account of Napoleon's final three days at Waterloo. I had always been interested in military history, but had previously focused only on the classics (i.e. Greek, Macedonian, and Roman militaries). He sparked an immense interest in me about Napoleon, and I was fortunate to be able to discuss with him in further detail the events at Waterloo.

Richard McAllister, along with Dr. Mignuolo, lectured exquisitely on the roots of the European Union and how the various attempts at unification ultimately failed. In addition, we also studied the differences between US and UK industry and their varying management styles.

Oddly enough while my days were filled with work and school, a great deal of what I learned happened at nights and weekends. Often I would go out after work with my co-workers and discuss American and U.K. politics more candidly. We would discuss the differences in our

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democracies, the reasons for going to war in Iraq, the necessity of war in general, and the future of democracy and globalization. Often we suggested different books and articles for each other to read. At least once a week, Mr. Sherman would accompany us and join in our discussions. His presence added greatly to the learning experience since it is rare that a student from a U.S. university has the opportunity to have an open discourse with a Member of Parliament.

I also had the privilege to travel about Europe on weekends and continued to travel upon the conclusion of my internship. Here I immersed myself in their culture, and tried to use their native language as much as possible. Sometimes my education was pedantic, consisting of studying symbolic significance, and sometimes it was merely coming to terms with understanding why the Spaniards took three-hour breaks in the middle of the day.

Regardless of what I was doing, I always met interesting people. We would converse on topics from international relations, to food, to music, to life. In fact, I met an Australian who competed in the Iron Man triathlon, and we discussed different training regimens.

Euro Cup 2004 was the main conversation piece for the first six weeks I was there. It was amazing to be wrapped up in the song and celebration and ultimate heartbreak of England's national team. Traveling to the different countries, I could immediately identify the country by their national colors they would proudly display in support of their national football team.

The staff that runs this program is amazing. The professors are extremely knowledgeable, and the staff responsible for housing were very cheerful and helpful. I met friends that I will converse with for years, and created a network of international contacts. I highly recommend this program to anyone who is studying in university. My only critique would be the paper requirement. During a seven week, summer program a twenty-page paper, consisting of original research is quite a heavy burden, when it is added to an internship and university classes. I think five page paper of substance would be an effective alternative.

MY SUMMER 2004 LONDON INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE BY STEVE MOSS

In a world where cultural and national barriers that produced isolationism in the past are diminishing, study abroad in general and an internship experience abroad in particular can be an exceptional opportunity. In my case it has become one of the greatest events of my life. I did have some personal concerns and problems with parts of the program, but overall the experience was fantastic.

My biggest concern revolved around my age, since I am a non-traditional age student. I started my undergraduate degree when I was twenty-eight years old and I participated in the Arcadia University London Internship Program during the summer of 2004, when I was thirty-three years old. Due to my age, I was concerned with how I would fit

in with the other students and with how I would be treated by the staff, who I assumed would be more comfortable working with younger students.

The other students involved in the program were nineteen to twenty-three. Before I left I was a little nervous about how the age gap might effect my living situation and the general social interaction throughout the program. I never had the social experience of living with other students in a dorm-like situation while attending college and wasn't sure how my age would affect my time in London. After I met many of the other students and spent some time with them, however, I found that my concern was not warranted since they were intelligent, friendly, and accepting. They added to the experience much more than I expected. For me, the socialization that I experienced at my residence, placement and classes was wonderful. I have managed to stay in contact with several of the students I met and have even gotten together with many of them since I have returned. This continued contact required effort from all of us, because we are all from different parts of the U.S. I hope that we are all able to continue to share the experiences we had in London and the new ones we have as some of us continue with school or enter the working world.

My age didn't affect my interaction with the Arcadia staff, instructors, or my placement. I was treated exceptionally well by everyone and was able to interact on a level appropriate for my age. Although, I believe that Arcadia's staff treated everyone as an adult, I did observe the staff and instructors adapting to students who acted immature with a more parental approach in the few cases where this seemed to be necessary. On several occasions, their level of professionalism was exceptional. My Internship Coordinator, Jenny Lee Spalding and I were able to communicate quite effectively. In addition to regular meetings, Jenny Lees-Spalding added to the entire experience by having all of her students to her home for dinner. It was nice to be exposed to an English household and to meet her husband. I felt that my Academic Supervisor, could have been more effective by providing better guidance concerning the project.

Another personal concern I had involved the type of work I would be doing at my placement. My particular placement was as a research assistant for Right Honorable Jon Trickett, the Member of Parliament from the Hemsworth constituency. I was afraid I would be relegated to doing busy work like photocopying or filing. I couldn't have been more wrong. Almost immediately after I began my placement, I was attending committee meetings, writing briefs, and handling many of the duties that came through the Parliament office. My immediate supervisor, Victoria Fewkes was a pleasure to work with and helped guide me though the overwhelming experience of working for a Member of Parliament. I not only learned how to do the job of a research assistant, but I gained an understanding of the internal workings of the British political system. While I had done research before I began my internship, I learned more by actually experiencing and witnessing the U.K.

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Parliament in action. I continued to work an additional week after the actual internship ended. Victoria was on holiday that week and it helped to have someone at the Parliament office to assist Mr. Trickett and to field phone calls, sort incoming and outgoing mail and keep track of the calendar of events which Mr. Trickett needed to attend.

Rt. Hon. Jon Trickett and his staff made me feel included in all phases of their operation. For several days, Victoria and I visited the constituency near Leeds where we worked with Kathryn Stainburn, the office manager. We helped out in the constituency office and distributed leaflets for several days, but the highlight of the trip for me was when Kathryn took us to a local hall where a show about the 1980's mining strike was presented. It was amazing to learn about the lives that are affected by the work that is done by Mr. Trickett and about this particularly dark period in British history. This experience became the impetus for my academic project, A Brief Historical Analysis of the Hemsworth Constituency, the Coal Industry and Jon Trickett, MP.

The problems I had resulted from the workload and communications related to some of the expectations. Because of time constrictions, I placed on myself, the internship work requirements, and the LI311 and LI321 courses; I feel I didn't spend the time I should have on the academic project. I also feel the Academic Supervisor could have provided more guidance concerning the project. If I had more guidance, I may have been able to produce the caliber of project that was expected and which I am capable of producing. I also believe that the guidelines were vague in some areas.

The scheduling of the LI321 course on Wednesday nights from 6pm to 9pm was problematic because of the difficulty of getting to City University from my placement in a timely fashion. There were also times when activities I was involved with at my placement conflicted with attending class. The instructors were more than cooperative about missing classes as long as there was a legitimate reason and I am aware that it must be difficult to find an appropriate time to hold the courses when all the students could attend. My activities at my internship placement were my primary focus and relegated the Wednesday night courses to a less important position. This was a personal choice, but one I think future students might also make.

Another communication problem I had with the program was some missing information before I arrived in London. For example, I did not know that there was a trip planned for Brussels, until I received my itinerary. The Brussels trip to visit the European Union Headquarters was nice, but I would have preferred to be advised of this before arriving in London. I had a great time in Brussels, but parts of the experience could have been better. Student's attitudes toward the trip were less than enthusiastic and I feel that the whole trip was at times a bit haphazard in its organization. We spent a short period of time at the actual E.U. headquarters and the speaker and tour guide were pressed for time to cover the material. It is my

understanding that this was the first time this trip was part of the program so I would expect it to be better in the future. I definitely feel that James Morrison, Student Services Officer and Holly Jagger, Academic Officer, who were on this trip, did a decent job of making this trip as comfortable as possible. There are always going to be problems with an excursion of this magnitude, especially during the maiden voyage.

Overall the experience was wonderful and an excellent chance to be exposed to cultures other than my own. I traveled to six different countries while I was in London and I learned more about Europe's past and present from my travels and the courses than I feel I could have ever learned in a classroom in the U.S. My internship experience was unbelievable and I continue to follow British politics more now after having had that level of exposure. I hope to return to London or Europe someday soon for work or vacation.

CONCLUSION

This article has described an international internship program. It is clear that the program demands are rigorous. In fact, one of the current concerns is that the program may have become too demanding. A second concern is that in some cases the students do not sufficiently tie the work experience to the project. A third concern is that there are so many people involved in the internship process that misunderstandings occur.

The students' comments concerning the internship experience indicate that they all found it to be valuable. It is clear that they believe they learned a great deal and that they acquired new skills. It is also clear that their comments reinforce some of the concerns the author and others have about the program.

Based upon the author's observations, observations of those involved in the program, and the student response, we are exploring a number of potential modifications to the program. Specifically, we are looking at ways to more fully integrate the two internship related courses with one another and with the internship experience. We are also looking at ways to better coordinate the activities of all those involved in the internship.

FOOTNOTES

¹The summer internship program is only six US semester credit hours. The student works four days per week for six weeks and takes only the LI311 and LI321 courses.

²The program descriptions are from the *ARCADIA University International Internship Student Handbook for 2004-2005*. This handbook provides detailed information about expectations, course coverage for LI311 and LI321, Guidelines for the Project, contact people, etc.