

# **Program Advisory**

## **End Report 7<sup>th</sup> Trimester**

2013-2014 Trimester 2



RSM  
**Student  
Representation**

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## Introduction

The 7<sup>th</sup> Trimester committee consists of four members, with three second-year students and one third-year student. There is a good balance between the BA/IBA students. All of them have been motivated during this first trimester, even though our committee has a relatively smaller size. Because the 7<sup>th</sup> trimester for the majority is something they will have to go through in a year, it also explains their high motivation.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Trimester committee is established to gather feedback about the exchange, internship, minor, interim projects and everything else that the student is confronted by in the 7<sup>th</sup> trimester of his study curriculum. It is the trimester where the student can give a personal touch to its study, within the frameworks set by the university. Therefore it is of high importance that the communication and the procedures for the various possibilities in this trimester are well regulated. This can also become better by reviewing the practice; this is how the student experienced it. The 7<sup>th</sup> trimester is perceived as the most important period for the RSM student. It is the chance to develop beyond the limits of the regular studies.

This trimester, due to miscommunication and insufficient support from the Interim project coordinator, we extended the topic of Interim project into next trimester, therefore the research topic Internship is the only focus of this trimester.

With kind regards,

Program Advisory  
7<sup>th</sup> Trimester Committee 2013-2014

## Methodology

In order to research the topic Internship, qualitative surveys were distributed manually to IBA/BA 3rd year students whom have completed their internships this year. In total 24 surveys were submitted. The survey aimed to study the points of improvement of the Career Services, overall satisfaction of the internship program, and general remarks. Besides that three students were interviewed about their experiences during the internship. The qualitative questions can be found in the appendix. Furthermore, a focus group was organized to critically examine the problems and formulate solutions.

The scale based questions followed a general pattern, with 1 being very negative or little, and 5 being very positive or much.

## Subject 1: Internship 2013-2014

The Bachelor students at RSM are provided with an option to participate in an internship. If a student takes an internship, the student can choose to include the program in the GPA with 15 ECTS or treat it as extracurricular. Nonetheless, the internship is required to be at least 10 week-long for the student to receive ECTS.

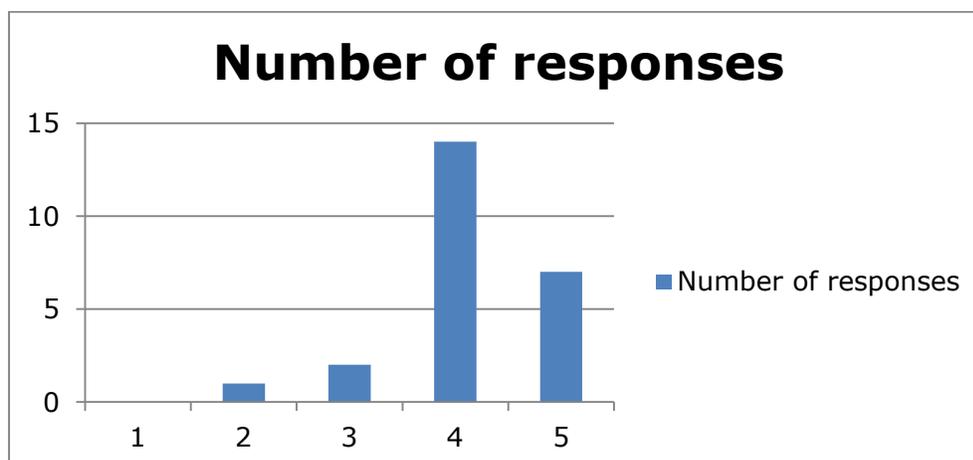
The internship programs are meant to encourage students to apply their academic knowledge to real world environment, improve CV, and experience the career path they will be taking after the graduation.

### Feedback from surveys:

Significant findings from the surveys are addressed in this section.

Out of the 24 surveys, none of the respondents referred to the Career Services (Job Board and Sin-Online channel) as their main source of information. In addition, the respondents unanimously agreed internship programmes deserve more than 15 ECTS.

As previously noted, the scale based questions followed a general pattern, with 1 being very negative or little, and 5 being very positive or much. One of these questions asked whether the internship has made the respondents feel they had a higher chance of getting a job. None of the students responded negatively (scale 1,2), while 18 students responding positively (scale 4); 3 students responding very positively (scale 5) and 3 students responding neutral (scale 3). 4 of the respondents provided comments in the margin of the paper stating they are unsure as they have only recently entered the labour market. The respondents were also found to have perceived the overall internship experience very positively, as the chart shown below. The only "2" was annotated, "finding a job was very difficult, but I enjoyed the internship."



Additionally, all the respondents rated the quality of their coaches' feedbacks positively. However, one respondent commented "(but) my friend had a problem with her coach." Lastly, majority of the respondents (17 out of 24) perceived the workload of the internship to be very demanding (scale 5), 4 felt demanding (scale 4) and 3 perceiving neutral (scale 3).

### **Feedback from interviews:**

The interviewed students were very satisfied with Career Services. They were happy with the given information by Career Services and believed an internship is necessary to obtain the practical skills that are also needed during the rest of their career. Besides that, people were aware of all requirements. All interviewed students would recommend an internship over an exchange, because they have more practical knowledge in the field of interest, a larger network, enrichment of cv (internship adds additional value for future job) and also a life changing experience. The internship should stay as it is (in the 7<sup>th</sup> trimester) and they thought it is easier for IBA to find an internship abroad because of their international network. Though if the IBA students would have wanted an internship in The Netherlands, they don't believe this to be difficult, because of the "strong economy" The Netherland has compared to other countries. Companies are always looking for students from the RSM to fulfill an internship.

Two respondents were very happy with their coach and claimed the coach guided them completely from beginning to end. One was less satisfied, because the communication was not easy and because waiting for a response could take long. Because one respondent could not find an internship until summer, the student believed it was hard to find a coach in time. They really had to convince the coach to still help. It is a problem, because it is crucial and obligatory to have a coach during your internship. Besides that it is also nice to have someone to guide you through the whole process of an internship and help when there are questions or difficulties.

### **Feedback from Focus Group:**

One of the first problems discussed was the different coaches providing varying amount of support to the students who are doing an internship. This is not to be understood as "some coaches are unsupportive." Rather, the problem arises from the relativity, with some coaches being extremely helpful and some coaches doing what is expected of them. The participants were alerted mainly due to the fact that their grade is entirely based on the report. (The participants believed this problem applies to the exchange program as well.) Furthermore, it was again voiced that internships should be awarded with more than 15 ECTS. The participants' arguments were based on their shared experience with other

students and what they have heard from students taking other options (i.e. exchange and minors).

Although the Student Job Board was created, respondents found it to be inapplicable, as the application requirements (e.g., requiring a bachelor degree or more), beginning date (e.g., jobs starting in February), and the type of work (e.g., side jobs, as oppose to full-time jobs) impeded the students to use this source as an internship-searching tool.

### **Solution according to PA:**

The students understand the school, with its limited resource, will not be able to provide the students with more information than those online communities solely dedicated to job searching (such as, LinkedIn and other job search portals). Hence, it was pointed out that Career Services should rather act as a network database. A suggestion was made for the Career Services to implement a new system, in which the students who had an internship can volunteer to help those who plan to take one. A list of the companies where they worked would be formulated, and students who apply to the similar (or the same) company or location would contact the volunteering students through the Career Services. We are not in favour of publishing the personal contacts, for obvious reasons. This change will provide the students with the following main benefits:

- a. The job searchers can learn the inside of the company in detail.
- b. The job searchers can learn about the exact application process needs to be taken
- c. The job searchers can utilize the connection established by the predecessors when applying to the identical internship program.
- d. The students who benefit from this system are likely to volunteer themselves as well (optimistically).

On the other hand, PA is aware of the school's stance expressed last year regarding this issue; any change in the ECTS given will not occur.

PA is also aware of the difficulties in quantifying the performance of individual students on their internship. Nevertheless, it may be viable to have the employer's assessment of the student considered, when grading him. The weight of the employer's assessment would ultimately be decided by the school.

The PA believes the school has already communicated with coaches of what is expected of them and what is not. Providing extra help from personal motivation of individual coach is not something to be controlled easily by the school. More lenient grading would allow students to achieve satisfying grades regardless of the helpfulness of individual coach. Nevertheless, such policy would fail to differentiate those that achieved excellence from those that achieved less.

Regarding the difficulty to find an appropriate coach, our advice is to match students with a coach as soon as they are sure they want to go on an internship. This way they do not have to worry about finding a coach when they already spent months on finding a proper internship. The coach could even help the student in the searching process if this help is asked for. Career Services could do this as well, but the coach-student relationship is probably more personal and therefore more effective. It would be nice if the student could have the time to look into diverse coaches to find the one that will fit the student and their area of interest the most.

**Checklist to improve the problem:**

- Career Services to implement a new system (such as an alumni network), in which the students who had an internship can volunteer to help those who plan to take one
- Collect professors who are willing to coach students during their internship
- Give students a deadline to let Career Services know whether they are sure they want to do an internship
- Arrange information for student to match coaches
- Set deadline for students to have made their final choice in their coach and match students with coaches who haven't chosen yet
- Make sure the coaches have a check-in moment with their students every two to three weeks

## Conclusion

There were four main problems identified by taking surveys. First, students do not find the Career Services to be effective. Hence, we suggest the Career Services to embrace a role of a bridge between job searchers and the ones who have already done an internship. Second, students believe more ECTS should be granted. However, the ECTS system does not appear to be a subject to change. Third, grading entirely based on the report was argued to be inappropriate. Thus, we propose the employers to assess the interns and this evaluation to be considered when grading students. The employers' assessments should not be rigorous, as such a requirement would significantly affect the employers' workload. Fourth, different coaches have varying levels of supportiveness. The PA has no official suggestion to effectively solve this problem.

The problem of finding a coach for your internship also came across during the interviews. Even though all students were happy with the given support, some claimed it was hard to find a professor willing to be their coach. This problem could be solved by giving students more deadlines and finding professors who are certainly willing to coach students.

## Appendix:

### Appendix 1: Internship survey

# StudentRepresentation: Program Advisory Subject: Internship programme February 2014

The Student Representation is an independent organization that represents students of BA and IBA program. The Program Advisory provides Programme Management with advice based on feedback they have gathered from their fellow students during the trimester. By filling in this form you can help the Student Representation to improve the quality of your education!

### **SPEAK YOUR MIND!**

With this form, you are giving feedback about the **internship**.

**We are interested in both positive and negative feedback and suggestions.**

Which of these programmes are you studying:  BA  IBA

Your internship took place:  Abroad  In the Netherlands

### **Access to Information:**

#### 1. What was your main source of information?

- Career Services Job Board
- Career Services SIN-Online channel
- Programme Management
- Colleagues
- RSM BA/IBA Current Students webpage
- BSc Internship Manual
- General web search

Others. *Please specify:* \_\_\_\_\_

2. Was it difficult to find an internship position that you are qualified for?

Very difficult       Very easy

4. Please briefly comment on the most challenging part of finding/getting an internship:

(e.g. interview, finding qualified position) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How did you find/get the position? Please briefly comment:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. When did you apply for the internship that you completed?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Did the Bachelor Internship Manual clearly explain the requirements and procedures necessary to help you find a suitable internship?

YES  NO (if no, please note what you felt was unclear):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Internship Evaluation:**

8. Did your internship experience help you feel more prepared for the real world, outside the academics?

No, I feel less confident       Yes, I feel more confident

9. How did you find the workload of your internship?

Very Little                                     Very Demanding

10. Overall, how would you rate your internship experience, considering the work atmosphere, experience, connections, etc?

Very bad                                     Very good

11. Do you think 15 ECTS is an appropriate amount of credit for an internship?

- No, less credit should be given
- Yes, it is an appropriate amount
- No, more credits should be given

12. Would you recommend the current 2nd year students to take an internship, instead of other 7th trimester options, such as, an exchange or minors?

- Yes
- No, because:

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13: What is the name of the company where you did your internship?

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14: How would you evaluate the feedback and guidance you received from your academic coach?

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15. Do you think your internship will help increase your chances of finding a job after graduation?

No                                          Yes

16. Has your internship already helped you enter the labour market more easily (in other words, have you already found a job or another internship as a result?) Please comment, if applicable:

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17: Do you have any other comments or things you would like to see improved about the internship?

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Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yyyy)

*Thank you for your feedback in this survey. We will handle it with privacy.*

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. What made you decide to go on an internship instead of taking a minor or going on exchange?
2. How hard was it to find an internship and how long did you have to search to find one?

*For IBA students: Do you believe it was much harder to find an internship abroad than one in The Netherlands?*

3. Do you think Career Services provided you with enough information about doing an internship or were many questions still unanswered? If you still had unanswered questions, can you mention the questions?
4. Do you believe taking this internship will give you opportunities in the same and/or other companies in the future?
5. What is your opinion on finding a professor as a coach during your internship? How much effort did you have to take to find one? Is he/she helpful?
6. Do you believe an internship during the 7th trimester (so instead of following courses) gives added value to the IBA/BA curriculum? Or should internships be done outside of the academic schedule?
7. Were you well aware of the requirements of the internship in order for it to be valid for the 7<sup>th</sup> trimester? If not, what do you believe could be improved?
8. Were you aware of the help Career Services offer? If so, did you accept their help and why? If not, how could you have been made more aware of their help?
9. How did you experience the company and internship in general? Would you recommend other students to go do an internship as well?

10. Other comments and general feedback: ...