

EVALUATION OF A GRAPHIC DESIGN AND DIGITAL MEDIA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

Internships can be an effective way of equipping university students with the job knowledge, experience and maturity required by future employees. They also provide a way of introducing students to potential employees. Therefore, students gain by enhancing their employability in the competitive labour market and university faculty can use the experiences to benchmark their courses and standards against employer requirements.

This case study considers the development and evaluation of internships for female Graphic Design and Digital Media students from Princess Noura Bent Abdulrahman University in Saudi Arabia. In particular it focuses on the planning and implementation of the internships; the contributions made by the interns and the companies; the most important components for successful internships and their evaluation. Finally, the paper presents recommendations to develop future internships based on the experience in the Graphic Design and Digital Media department.

Focus groups and the final reports from the interns, company mentors and academic advisors showed that the internship program was implemented well, with companies surprised at the level of work produced by the female interns. As such the model developed could be used by other countries seeking to improve graduate employment in design companies.

Keywords:

Internship, Graphic Design and Digital Media, Professional Practices, gender issues, Saudi Arabia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internships may be 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 and Dial, 1988). DiLorenzo-Aiss and Mathisen (1996) characterise a typical internship program as having four elements (1) a specified number of work hours, (2) level of remuneration, (3) credit awarded, and (4) oversight is provided by a

faculty coordinator or other university representative and a corporate counterpart.

The importance of internships in undergraduate programs has been widely recognised (e.g. Johari and Bradshaw, 2008), and is seen as creating win-win situations for the students, organization as well as the university (Coco, 2000).

Organizations offer internships to students for a variety of reasons such as provision of low-cost opportunities for production, updating company

know-how and identifying new staff. Students benefit by learning about corporate structure, processes, and professional behaviour and obtain opportunities for authentic learning and practice (Johari, Bradshaw, and Aguilar, 2002). They acquire knowledge that is situated and performed in an actual workplace producing real products (Henry, Rehwaldt and Vineyard, 2001).

Medical internships are well defined and developed in Saudi Arabia. Al-Moamary, Mamede, and Schmidt, (2010) have discussed the traditional Medical Internship (MI) and have presented a framework for Medical Interns' Competencies (FMIC) implemented within the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) in Jeddah. Ismail, et al (2010) have similarly developed a manual for a Nursing Internship in King Fahd Hospital in Dammam and Al Samman (2012) has developed successful business related internship programs in the Alfaisal University in Riyadh.

However, Graphic Design and Digital Media internships are not so well established in Saudi Arabia. Princess Noura University in Riyadh offers the first program of this type in the country. As such, there are no guidelines for the conduct of internships for female design students in this area. The Department was established in September 2010, with the first internship scheduled for summer 2012. In planning the Graphic Design and Digital Multimedia Program (GDDM), the program designers (university provost, department advisory board, faculty, and local industry leaders) recognized the importance of providing a "real world" experience for the learners. The internship program is a critical element of the new department, which has already gained recognition in the university and the regional community for its distinguished students. The creation and evaluation of the internship program will form the case study of this research.

The current mission of the Department of Graphic Design and Digital Media is to "cooperate with the demands of national economic development and train those who have visual communication planning and production abilities." Following graduation, students may be expected to find employment in design or advertising companies, design departments of businesses, publishers, animation studios, broadcasting companies, schools etc or to take an advanced degree. Internships provide an essential opportunity to put training into practice, to learn practical professional design skills, and for students to understand their own potential and their position in the design community. As mentioned by Kang (1999) the training of human resources is undoubtedly an important priority for the design industry. Internships are important in cultivating professional designers and in linking practical design ability to design education.

Despite theoretical assumptions which assert that internship projects are valuable to all stakeholders, some internship programs have produced less than satisfactory outcomes (Hartt and Rossett, 2000; Anantadjaya, 2011). For example, students may be poorly matched with employers, employers may not be willing to spend time with students or develop a meaningful programme of work for them, and academics may not support the placements or monitor/challenge the student's experience, or provide opportunities to merge the learning/experiences on the internship with the undergraduate program (e.g. Goad 1998, Ball et al, 2006).

Saudi female students, may face additional problems in relation to gender issues. Schools and higher education establishments are still segregated on the basis of gender (Baki, 2004). Gender segregation in the workplace may be a barrier for highly qualified females who wish to take up employment in the work place; facing not only physical but societal and cultural barriers. Mackey (2002) commented on the way in which

restrictions of woman's mobility impacted the education and employment of Saudi women.

Therefore a model for a new internship program was developed, taking into account the needs of the interns, companies, and academic departments. The case study considers the development of the course through to the experiences of the first cohort and its evaluation.

An internship is often the student's first experience with professional companies and possibly even in the workplace. Ideally an internship should link classroom learning to workplace performance. Internships should ideally include projects and work which relates to the academic major of the student.

The Internship may be considered in terms of its preparation, implementation and conduct and evaluation. In the preparation phase, internship locations that match teaching goals and intended learning outcomes are identified, and assignments created according to business needs and the students' abilities. The Internship Phase involves cooperation between the academic and industrial partners to provide a meaningful experience of the company and the student which cements student learning. In the post internship phase (evaluation phase), the experience is evaluated in terms of the benefits the student derived from the internship in terms of achieving their learning outcomes and personal/professional objectives and fulfilling the needs of the company.

In terms of fitting the internship to the course structure, all students receive a grade after completion of the internship based on the assessment provided by

- the site mentor (in relation to the project development and organizational behaviour);
- the intern's online portfolio and attendance at the course seminar and individual sessions. Students' e-portfolios represent 40% of the

final grade. The portfolios are a collection of the projects completed during the internship program and should include details relating to the topic and general purpose of the project, audience characteristics, learning themes or objectives, subject content, applied instructional methods, due dates, design implementation of graphic design rules, authoring process capabilities.

However, an internship can only be a true learning experience if constructive feedback is provided. An effective evaluation should compare the internship with the goals of the program. Therefore, reflective reports were submitted by the students after their internship was completed. These documented (a) all events that occurred during the internship; (b) Unforgettable personal reflection; and (c) Evidence of lessons learned in a journalistic story-telling format. This was mirrored with reports from the academic advisors and company mentors provided the department with a reflection report about their experience.

In addition, focus group sessions were conducted to gather more information about the experiences of the interns in relation to how well the internship program met their needs and enabled them to display, practice and improve on their skills.

The case study evaluates the effectiveness of the Graphic Design and Digital Media internship course during its first running in summer 2012. In particular, the research sought to understand

- Facilitators and inhibitors to conducting a female internship program in Saudi Arabia;
- The roles and the tasks of the interns, the department and the companies in the Internship Program;
- The regulations necessary for conducting an effective Internship in this domain in Saudi Arabia.

2 Design of the internship

In order to develop a high quality internship program which would benefit all stakeholders, a user centred approach was developed which sought to understand internships (through a literature review and analysis of best practice in Saudi Arabia), a student survey and interviews with prospective companies who may host the internships.

The views of 18 Graphic Design and Digital Media students registered on the Professional Practices course who were expected to participate in summer 2012 internship program were solicited through a questionnaire. Representatives of 40 Graphic Design and Digital Media companies in Riyadh were interviewed. The results of these studies are presented below.

2.1 The student perspective

The idea of an internship was new to the students. Of the 18 students, 8 did not have any previous knowledge about these prior to their registration on the Professional Practices course. 5 had a clear understanding of the concept, while a further 5 had a mistaken understanding with respect to the assigned roles and the formality of the program. For example, 12 believed that at the pre-intern stage, their role was limited to selecting a company from those sources by the academic department. Only a third understood that they needed to be pro-active and search for companies which met the criteria laid down by the department (mentioned in Section 3.5.1), and who would accept them as interns. 95% expected the department to answer any questions they had concerning the internship. Only 8 students conducted company visits. 4 of these visited just one company, 3 visited 2 companies, with only one student visiting three companies. Just over 60% of the students believed that attendance at the company premises would not be mandatory

and that they could work from home as a freelancer if a project allowed this flexibility.

In visiting the companies the students paid particular attention to the comfort of the working environment and the type of services and business offered by the company. 7 of the 8 students felt that what they found out in their visits conflicted with their impression of the company prior to the visit. Specifically they discovered that even companies which design high quality products and have a good reputation in the Saudi market do not necessarily have a well designed working space.

Although not all students visited the companies, they did phone them and enquire about the following (in order of importance):

- Whether there was a separate female section
- Language in which the business was conducted (important for students wishing to improve their English)
- Reputation of the company (important for the development of the student's CV)
- Type of business conducted
- Possible tasks they would be assigned
- Location
- Working hours.

44% of the students claimed that gender segregation did not affect their selection of the internship company. And they agreed on working in a company that requires them to deal with other gender only if it is applying the Chamber of Commerce regulations of having a private workplace for females.

While 66% of the students indicated that the gender separation in the working place would affect their selection of the internship company. Most confirmed that gender separation was not their concern. Male guardians would not sign the Consent form required by the university unless they were assured that the workplace was

segregated. 30% of the students indicated that they would not feel comfortable if they were collocated with male employees and believed that this would affect their performance.

2.2 The company perspective

65 companies, registered as providing either graphic design or digital media services in the Saudi Chamber of Commerce and located in the major cities of Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam), were contacted through official channels to determine their suitability for hosting internships and their willingness to do so. 7 out of the 65 did not wish to take part in the scheme. A total of 58 companies were visited during which a presentation was made about the department and the internship program. Semi structured interviews were used to explore the type of business, the nature of the design process adopted by the company, their understanding of the internship process and its value and the likelihood of their offering an internship.

From this, 18 out of 65 companies were identified as being unsuitable for the program because they did not meet the university's criteria for internships (see section 3.5.1). Of these, 6 (out of 18) would only offer a freelance job which could enhance the student's portfolios, a third were unfamiliar with the idea of internships, with some believing that an internship could be conducted through providing the students with repetitive summer training through the whole duration of their undergraduate program. Worryingly, the remaining third considered training the interns as a waste of time and effort for their company's employees.

Although all the companies approached were registered in the Chamber of Commerce as design companies, 10 out of the 18 companies were found to not be professional, exclusive design companies or having an in-house design production department. This meant that the tasks

and activities assigned to the interns might not match with the core of their studies. Thus, only 40 companies were approved for the Internship program. Student resumes were sent via the department to the companies and interviews arranged.

In summary, the obstacles which needed to be addressed related to making the planning of the internship easier and more transparent for all parties are as follows:

- The lack of knowledge of the students and their guardians about internships in general and this program specifically (e.g. the process, the roles and responsibilities, payment).
- Differences between local and international firms in terms of their awareness of internships, their value and conduct.
- Students' misunderstandings of the formality of the pre-internship phase, which meant that they did not respect the company deadlines for production of material to support their applications.
- English is a communication language in most of the companies and this was a barrier in contacting companies for most the students. Only few companies required the communication to be in Arabic, therefore, bilingual handbooks were developed to facilitate communication with companies (Abou Hassana, 2012).
- The role of faculty staff and the students in administering and accepting internships was not clear.

3. The Internship program at Princess Noura University

The purpose of the internship program that students should maintain the principle that theory cooperates with practice. Students are required to build future career abilities. In addition, their developmental direction is to "actively strengthen

cooperation and put the design studio internship into practice in order to promote internship design abilities” (Kang 1999). Given the underlying principle that theory and practice are equally important, it is the ambition of the University to provide opportunities for students to gain professional practice (e.g. through Internships) in all courses (e.g., publication design, editing design, packaging design, display design, etc.) offered by the University.

In following an action research cycle, the design of the new internship program was grounded in the student experiences and the interviews with the companies, which fed into, and continue to feed into the internship program. Following Cheng’s (1995) analysis consideration was given to the (1) Purposes and effects of teaching. (2) Purposes and effects of business activities. (3) Cooperation in internship supervision. (4) Reaction of teachers and students. (5) Reaction of the company.

3.1 overview of the internship

Cheng (1995) proposed a set of design education models which match today’s social and economic environment climate. These include: (1) Internship courses for students as part of the school week. (2) Semester courses in cooperation with industry. (3) Student internships at design companies, offices, or businesses during vacation periods. (4) Stays in factories or companies to learn and study. Such approaches are generic and can be applied to any domain requiring elements of professional practice.

An internship was proposed as the most appropriate experience for the graphic design and media students according to Cheng model of student internships at design companies, offices, or businesses during vacation periods.

In the proposed program students participate in design projects in their internship. Teachers act in

the roles of consultants, but do not actually join in the internship. From a teaching perspective, this provides opportunities for students to learn from others (including their peers) and discover and solve problems by themselves (Kang, 1999).

Although internships in Saudi Arabia have been available to students at other universities and in more established disciplines (e.g. medical and business professions), there is no tradition of internships at the new Graphic Design and Digital Media course. Not only are art and design courses fairly recent innovations in Saudi Arabian higher education curricular, but also the art and design professions are only just starting to gain recognition and high esteem. From a gender perspective, the art and design profession is only just becoming available to females. Design businesses in Saudi Arabia have only been licensed to males with female participation confined to project based cooperation in the home. Two years ago the Chamber of Commerce provided design businesses with licences to allow female recruitment. This was limited businesses which could provide a separate working place and private female section. Few design business have female sections, so limited internship opportunities area available. This makes relationship management important. Matching able students to companies, enables a professional design association to be developed in which partners can cooperate and work together, so that not only can students enrich their professional knowledge with their internship, but also the businesses can obtain human resources information.

3.2 Role of faculty staff

The role of the university faculty staff is to establish and maintain these relationships for the benefit of current and future stakeholders, and to provide a liaison bridge between the students and the businesses. In the run up to the internship, staff should engender a professional attitude in

their students using their demonstrated performance, attitude, attendance, and enthusiasm to judge their suitability for an internship. In addition, staff should match the companies with the applicants' interests and skills in order to best provide students with the required specialties.

During the internships, the teachers have to understand and address the students' goals and characteristics, using departmental administration procedures as a communication bridge for ensuring that students reach their goals. After the internship, the students, teachers and businesses need to evaluate the student performance and reflect on the process.

3.3. Positioning the Internship course within the course structure

The Graphic Design and Media Course is of four years duration. In the first two years, students learn their design craft with the third and fourth years concentrating on professional design education. During the first year in the program students cover the art and design foundation courses including: two levels of drawing, two dimensional design, three dimensional design, photography, colour theory and applications and two level of art history. In the second year courses covered include: history of graphic design and digital media, typography, two levels of graphic design, two levels of digital media, materials and processes, human and environmental system and professional practices course. Therefore, the logical position of the internship is between the third and fourth year. This means that students will have mastered the elements of their trade, and the experiences acquired during the internship can be built on and used to shape specialism in the final year. A prerequisite, Professional Practices course (run in Year 2) provides students with knowledge of professional best practices related to visual communication design, contact with practicing designers and skills needed for career

preparation (e.g. interview training, resume writing, portfolio development).

3.4 Role of Company Mentor

The role of the company mentor is crucial to the success of the internship. Company mentors need to balance the needs of the company, whilst understanding the intern's needs, abilities and ambitions and engaging them in learning that is personal and cooperative. A mentor can respect a learner by valuing the involvement in company activity and the artifacts/ideas they produce in their own right (Johari and Bradshaw, 2008), while appreciating that the intern may have been trained very differently and have their own personal and cognitive styles and being sensitive to learner ideas. For example, students use multiple sources of information, including other individuals, when they confront problems in complex real situations.

A highly skilled mentor who provides constant encourage mentor and constructive feedback for the student is an important part of the learners social support network (Chiappetta, and Watt,2011). Therefore the company mentor should a) believe in the learner; (b) focuses on both process and product; (c) provide encouragement, and (d) provides feedback.

The appointment of the mentors is the company's role. The Internship unit coordinator from the Graphic Design and Digital Media department visited the company and explained an overview of the Graphic and digital media internship program. Accordingly the company assigned the mentors. The mentor role is shared between the Company and the university as stated in the Internship booklet proposed in Abou Hassana, (2012) (details in section 3.5). In addition, a short training is provided by the academic faculty staff to the company's mentor considering the following: (a) the internship aims, objectives and process; (b) Identifying the expected learning

outcomes from the internship experience; (c) the interns design and professional background; (d) courses offered in the department.

3.5 Administration of the Internship

An Internship and Graduates Unit was established to deal with the intricacies of relationship management, placement (e.g. CV and portfolio storage and transmission), record keeping communication and evaluation.

The research outlined in the previous section pointed out that there was a lack of knowledge about internships in Princess Noura University. In order to fill this gap a Handbook was developed which outlined the process, showed the, benefits, roles and responsibilities. A need emerged to develop a set of rules and regulations for conducting the Internship Program. Material developed to support other internships in Saudi Arabia was reviewed and best practices adopted.

All students successfully completing the prerequisite module in Professional Practices are eligible for Internships. Following their request to be considered for an internship, the department's selection committee members studied the student's suitability for the placement according to their strengths comparing to the company needed skills but the decision depends on the student's selection. The committee then confirms placements of individual interns with specific corporate internship settings. The student is expected to work at the company on a full time basis for a total of 225 hours with 6 visits from the academic advisor to assess the placement and provide the student with constructive feedback. Thus, the total duration of the internship program varied between 6-8 weeks depending on office hours.

3.5.1 Determining prospective companies

According to Abou Hassana (2012) companies wishing to host an intern must meet the following criteria:

- Be licensed by the Chamber of Commerce,

- Have a good reputation and standing in the market,
- Have an environment and atmosphere suitable for female students, bearing in mind cultural and religious ethics and needs (separate section for female workers),
- Be able to provide tasks, activities, and responsibilities related to their field of study and academic skills which will benefit their professional careers,
- Demonstrate that Interns will not be replacing regular employees,
- Have an agreement with the university which outlines:
 - The assignation and working relationship of the on-site advisor/s and department advisor through the program and a commitment to give meaningful feedback on their performance.
 - The provision of a daily and weekly timetable at the initial phase of the training which outlines their responsibilities and defines the structure of the program.
 - The capacity of intern, the, length of program (six to eight weeks), and the possibility of remuneration
 - The accommodation to be provided for the intern (e.g. Private desk, access to computing resources equipped with relevant software).

3.5.2 Assigning interns to prospective companies

Potential interns make a selection from the list of approved companies and are encouraged to visit as many as they needed to inform their decision. Most students limit their visits to one or two companies. However, they believed that the more companies they visited the more confident would be their selection. This was seen as essential in establishing an accurate impression of the company.

From the companies' perspective they preferred to not only assess the submitted portfolio, but also interview the student prior to signing the internship contract. Therefore, students were assigned to companies considering their preferences, companies' intern capacity, and guardians' approval. Academic advisors are assigned to the interns based on the nature of the company's business, location and the dates of the internship.

3.5.3 Internship Grading system

After the internship period is over and all the documents are submitted, an evaluation committee set by the department evaluates all assessment tasks for the intern to be able to earn credit for the training course. The proportion of the evaluation is out of hundred and will be converted to a letter grade (A, B, C, or D).

According to Abou Hassana (2012) the rubric used for grading consisted of: (a) Site mentor overall satisfaction with projects and performance 40%, (b) e-Portfolio (demonstrating project progress and graded by the academic mentor)—30%, (c) Academic Mentor overall satisfaction performance and projects—30%.

Assessment Task	Proportion of Final Grade (100%)
Internship Portfolio of duties available on the blog	40%
Academic mentor performance evaluation	30%
On-site Company's mentor evaluation	30%

Portfolio blog

The internship portfolio is all the projects, tasks, essays, presentations, etc. completed by the intern

during their work at the site and declared in the digital blog.

Academic mentor evaluation

The academic mentor will assess the overall performance and conduct through the whole period based on the visits, communication, updated work on the blog, and feedback from the company, attendance and discipline of the intern.

Company's mentor evaluation

The company onsite mentor will assess the intern based on the various criteria forms provided from the university academic department.

4. Evaluation of the Internship program

The progress of the first cohort of students on the internship program was evaluated as part of an iterative development cycle to create an effective and enjoyable internship program at Princess Noura University which met the needs of all stakeholder groups: students, teachers (academic mentor), and companies (Site) mentors. The following factors were considered:

- The contribution of the internship experience to learning and skill development;
- The relative importance of different elements in contributing to a successful internship;
- The elements which interns felt important to a successful experience;
- The companies' experience of the implementation of the internship plan.

4.1 Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted to understanding how individuals involved in the internship made sense of the internship experience. A social constructionist lens allows for the formation of a shared reality through social interaction, and so the researchers were able to

interpret the experiences shared by stakeholders through focus group discussion (Flick, 2006). The characteristics of the interns and organization practices could be considered as the independent variables, with the dependent variables being the 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 (i.e. the companies hosting the internship and the University department) need to bring to the partnership in order to achieve a successful internship experience.

Data was collected from focus groups with students, as this method allows individuals to engage in discussion in a manner “designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non- threatening environment” (Krueger, 1988). Focus group discussions were also undertaken with the groups separately: academic mentors and companies mentors. In addition, reflective reports submitted by the interns, company and academic mentors were analysed.

4.2 Participants

Participants were drawn from three groups;

1. Interns. 18 students undertaking the internship course of the Graphic Design and Digital Media Department in summer 2012 participated in the study. Interns were not awarded extra credit for participating in this study and were studied as separate cases (Yin, 1994).
2. Academic advisors. 6 academic advisors (faculty members) from the Graphic design and digital media department who ‘supervised’ in the interns participated in the study; Each advisor was assigned four students.

3. Of the companies which offered internships, 14 agreed to participate in the study. These were all based in Riyadh and all fulfilled the selection criteria detailed earlier in section 3.5.1.

Almost all the companies followed the ADDIE (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) (Molenda, Pershing and Reigeluth, 1996) model in product development. Some interns were given specific projects to work on throughout their internship; others were attached to a larger project and were assigned to undertake tasks within this. Of the 18 students, 12 students worked as design assistants and 6 as computer graphic assistants.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Interns

62% of the students felt that their internship had been both “beneficial and effective”. However, 4 (i.e. 25%) participants regarded their internships to have been beneficial but not as effective as they wished. They admitted encountering difficulties and having negative feelings during the internship. However, they took the long term view and regarded the internship as a platform for them to “learn beyond textbook”. 2 interns claimed that their internships had been of no benefit.

When asked to identify the most important factors to a successful internship, students mentioned “support from supervisors/colleagues”, “task clarity” and “challenging tasks” most frequently.

56% of the students claimed that the support and guidance of supervisors and colleagues were the most significant factor to achieve a successful internship. Furthermore, 4 out of 18 interns expressed that the internship should have a systematic, transparent structure, in which assignments and expectations of the interns were clearly stated. In addition, 4 interns felt that a challenging job was an important contributor to

the effectiveness of the internship. Students who had completed relatively important, difficult and new tasks described their internship as “fruitful”. Other factors contributing to success included “being able to take the initiative”, “academic preparedness”, “having a positive attitude” and “mentorship”.

According to 4 interns, “being able to take the initiative” was important even when the intern’s job was not satisfactory and they lacked supervisory and peer support. They explained that being proactive in understanding the job and the company helped to reduce the negative effects of a poorly organized internship. Nearly a third of the interns commented that “being able to apply what (I) have learned in university is of top priority in the internship”.

In discussing the benefits of the internship, “knowledge about the world of work”, “career skills” and “career focus” were the most frequently rated comments. 38% of the interns felt that the most important aspect of the internship was to help them to learn about the industry and the operation of the workplace. 88% appreciated the fact that the internship allowed them to be more career focused, centering around their internship fields.

To assist in their future careers, all interns received a certificate from their employers that could be used when applying for future jobs. 16 of the students planned to pursue careers in the fields of their internship after graduation. A third of the students were offered jobs in the companies in which they had an internship.

80% of the interns felt that they had improved their employability skills, including management skills, independence, presentation skills, practice in gaining trust from others through work, career planning, time management, language skills, and responsibility. 5 interns felt that the greatest benefits of internship were the learning of interpersonal skills, communication skills; 4 mentioned “relationship building”; 3 interns indicated they gained most from the “practical benefits” brought by the internship while one

ranked “reality check” as the top benefit. In terms of future employability, 80% of the interns felt that the program had made a positive contribution to their networking skills, peer relationships leadership skills, and self-confidence

Additionally, 75% of the interns claimed to have gained technical skills during their internships, and wished that they had had more technical and field work experience before they began their internships.

14 out of 18 indicated that there was an increase in their commitment to social responsibility.

When asked to evaluate the most important organizational criteria for a successful placement, 9 interns agreed that the “company environment” was the main factor that influenced their evaluation. Some pointed out that clear task assignments, clarified expectation, and regular feedback and sharing sessions showed a company’s commitment to internship. According to 12 interns, being respected and treated like a member of the organization (“sense of belonging”) enhanced the organization’s image in their minds.

7 interns suggested that it was advisable for companies to develop a systematic plan for the internship. When interns were treated as part-time workers, they were frustrated by a lack of tasks, or by the allocation of too many, unimportant, tedious tasks. In such cases, 5 of the students suggested that the onus should be placed on the intern to be proactive and take the initiative to learn. 5 interns suggested that the supervisors should provide more support during internship and 5 interns pointed out the expectations of the student and the host organization should be clearly specified at the beginning of the internship.

4.3.2 Academic mentors

All 6 academic mentors indicated that the internship program had a large, positive impact on the students. 5 out of 6 mentors mentioned that the students not only gained various skills, but most importantly understood what it would be like to work in a real environment. All academic mentors commented that overall the companies

were satisfied with the level of the interns and they would be willing to hire them.

However, all mentors indicated that the students lacked essential employment skills, such as time management and responsibility in completing assigned tasks. 4 out of 6 of the mentors revealed that the student's digital skills (e.g. Adobe illustrator and Adobe Indesign) were below industry standards.

All mentors agreed that even though the students had received the internship booklet and an orientation workshop about the process, they still did not understand the regulations, process of submitting the forms and the requirements relating to writing a blog and report. One mentor raised an issue that it was not just the student who needed to be aware of the nature of the internships, but the guardians as well. She gave an example of where a father had complained about his daughter working in a mixed gender company. Under this instruction, the departmental administrator assigned the student to a different company where the females are located in a separate work space and the number of female employees in the company is larger.

All academic mentors felt that one visit per week to the companies was acceptable. However, the visits needed to be doubled during the last 2 weeks of the internship to finalize the students' assessment requirements. All mentors agreed that the ideal number of students assigned to each mentor could be (4-5 students), but that academic mentors should deal with different companies. However, limits were imposed to reduce overworking the mentors; academic mentors should not cover more than two companies; and no company should have more than three interns.

All academic mentors agreed that in order to create a successful internship they should:

- (1) Establish clear task goals and performance criteria;
- (2) Encourage interns to consider work ethics and time management skills;
- (3) Encourage interns to work with the organization's systems (training, personal, and company system);
- (4) Encourage interns to become active thinkers (organizational analysts and active participants);
- (5) Keep all parties positively involved.

Overall, all mentors agreed that guiding, assessing and visiting the students was manageable, but that the process could be further improved by:

- Revisions to the grading system. Details presented in section 3.5.3.
- The interns report was only worth 20% of the total marks, which restricted marking to content, not quality.
- The time at which information was posted on the blog should be taken into account in the grade system. Because the students delay in updating their blogs affects their academic mentor information about their status.
- The percentage of the grade assigned to the company mentor should be increased, as they could assess the intern's blog in relation to their knowledge about the students' daily tasks.
- Providing more pre-intern training in terms of work ethics, time management skills in particular, internship process, selecting companies for placement, and the roles of the department, academic mentor, company's mentor and their role as an intern.

Additionally, 3 academic mentors suggested that the selection of the perspective companies should

be solely a departmental decision, with no participation from the student in this. However, the other staff felt that the student's preferences should be taken in to account.

4.3.3 Company Mentors

75% of the company mentors confirmed that the students initially lacked time management skills, which led to them being given less trust and responsibility. However, the internship provided them with much needed employability skills. They explained that they helped students to improve their employability skills by giving them responsibility which created a sense of ownership. 2 out of 14 employers pointed that she taught students to talk less and work more. 10 out of 14 company mentors assigned students specific tasks and tried to make them work and think independently.

Four of the company mentors stated that they would be willing to hire the student placed with them, because they were literate, eager to learn, and quickly became a skilled employee.

5. DISCUSSION

Proceeding from the belief that theory and practice should be given equal importance in Art and Design education, the internship course has been made mandatory for students in the Graphic Design and Digital Media Department of Princess Noura University. In order to develop a high quality experience for the students and the companies that hosted them, stakeholder (interns, academic mentors and companies' site mentors) experiences were evaluated in the internship course of summer 2012.

Coco (2000) recognized eight predictors of internship effectiveness, three individual/personal factors (academic preparedness, positive attitude, and self-initiative) and four organizational ones (challenge job, effectiveness of supervision, autonomy task clarity), and compensation.

From this case study the following factors have been identified which confirm and extend those proposed by Coco (2000).

Table 1: Predictors of internship effectiveness

Individual factors	University factors	Companies factors
Develop knowledge and skills required by the market	Quality of mentoring	Effectiveness of supervision
Positive attitude	Adequate briefing of students	Task clarity
Self-initiative	Provision of professional skills training	Well equipped female sections in the companies licensed for females by the Chamber of Commerce
Develop employment skills	Training students to an industry standard in use software and media	Provide University with constructive feedback to develop their study plans
	Increase the students guardians awareness of the internship program and the design industry	
Pre-internship training about the internship roles and process.	Academic preparedness	company's mentors training about their role in the internship , forms and grading system
	Academic mentors training about their role in the internship , forms and grading system	
	Plan the internship program efficiently	Agreement on the university's rules and regulation

It could be argued that the whole structure of the Graphic Design and Digital Media course is a preparation for the student's internship, this starts with the development of knowledge and design skills in the art and design foundation, Graphic design, and digital Media courses which satisfy the needs of the emerging market; the course of Professional Practice aims to provide generic skills (such as ethics in design practices, knowledge of business branding, professional and workplace skills, critical and creative skills required for the analysis and evaluation of the market place, knowledge about design industry and business practices, conducting interviews, developing portfolios, careers in national and international market, Business Legal forms, finance and issues related to design industry) which increase the employability of the students. This is conducted using guest speakers and practitioners (such as free lancer graphic and digital media designer, employer from different positions in design companies, entrepreneurs, and experts from the Chamber of Commerce) who share their experiences with students. Students enrolled on this course are required to prepare personalized stationary and portfolios illustrating their creative ability.

The comments from all stakeholders can be interpreted as revealing that the Professional Practice module, even with its inclusion of outside speakers, is not sufficient to prepare students for employment in this culture. Though Women's schooling at all levels – elementary, secondary, high school and university – remained under the department of Religious Guidance until 2002 and according to Hamdan (2005) If Saudi Arabia plans to survive this globalised era women's education in all fields should be a priority. In September 2010 King Abdulla Bin Abdulaziz opened the largest Females University in the World and granted the largest budget in Education confirming his support to women's education. Internships are one way of bridging the gap and

developing student's employability skills. Of particular note were student weaknesses in time management (e.g. arriving on time, meeting deadlines) and conduct in a professional environment (e.g. taking initiative, being proactive, and not gossiping). It is the responsibility of the university to meet the companies half way by providing potential interns who are not only excelled designers and artists but who see the opportunities of the placement for advancement of their careers.

Although a handbook was produced this may not have been detailed enough in formalizing codes of conduct and expectations. Students clearly received a culture shock when they entered the workplace, and perhaps the same might be true for the companies who hosted the internship. To avoid this and smooth the transition into the internship it is proposed that a learning contract (Matheson, 2003), is signed by all parties which clearly delineates the responsibilities and tasks they will have to perform once they have gone through the initial placement phase (Palmer & Savoie, 2002).

Additionally more attention needs to be placed on the introduction of the intern to the company and their first week of internship. This period of pre-training could allow interns to reflect on what obstacles they may encounter in the future during their placement period. After a student has developed a mindset for understanding the values of an internship program, s/he will realize that there are many new challenges and barriers which need to be faced, which are quite domain independent (such as time keeping, adjusting to colleagues' behaviour, multi-tasking). If not properly dealt with, these challenges could result in anger, depression, or burnout (Levine et al., 2006). However, these problems will be ones faced by all interns. Using learned knowledge to make rational judgments when addressing these challenges is determined by personal growth.

Levine et al. (2006) concluded that internship experiences provide many potential triggers for personal growth, and that the balance between facilitators and barriers helps to determine whether personal growth is more or less likely to occur. This needs to be recognized and facilitated in the internship course.

Therefore it is proposed that after the first week of the internship all students attend a workshop where they openly share and discuss their experiences and as an action learning set (Mumford, 1996), mutually support (with guidance from their academic mentors, where appropriate) each other in rising to the challenges and maximizing the potential of their internship. A second, separate workshop should be held with the company mentors not only to discuss their issues and concerns, but also to reinforce the requirement for the mentors to look for opportunities, and ways to support the growth and learning of their interns. Following these workshops the learning contracts should be signed.

Similar workshops should be conducted at the end of the internships, with an opportunity for students to share their experiences with future cohorts and inform the iterative improvement of the internship program.

The internships were successful in improving the students' time management and employment skills, their knowledge about the world of work and their career skills were developed; and increasing students' self-confidence, communication skills, independence, presentation skills, gaining trust from others through work and responsibility. Although all internships were successful with the company being pleasantly surprised by the high quality of work, it was noted that the students' technical skills and abilities in using the design software were below the company's expectations.

Students benefitted from their internship by understanding more about the skills they need to succeed in business and by an increased levels of motivation in their studies. They claimed that after completing the internship their grades increased and wanted to apply the knowledge they acquired during their internships to their university courses.

Conclusion:

The design and evaluation of the female internship program at Princess Noura University showed there was a need to close the gap between the department graduates and the needs of future employees. In particular female students in Saudi Arabia may have little knowledge of employment or the work environment, and companies seeking to employ female graduates may not understand their needs and requirements. As Graphic Design and Digital Media is not so well established in Saudi Arabia companies are not aware of the existence of Saudi graduates in the field and tend to recruit specialized internationals. Internships provide a way of managing expectations and changing the ethos in companies to make it more attractive to female employees.

Considering the multi stakeholder perspectives has shown that the internship was rated highly by all involved, with students gaining much needed employability skills they were not receiving elsewhere in their education. The companies, derived both short and long term benefits from the interns – in terms of the short term delivery of high quality work which helped them to deliver against their objectives, and also in the longer term by revealing more about their needs of future students (e.g. in terms of professionalism) and the level of skills they require of graduates.

Feedback received will be used firstly to inform teaching and assessment in the Graphic Design and Digital Media Department in order to ensure that high quality graduates enter the market place,

and secondly to improve the effectiveness of the mentorship program, through a more appropriate grading system, additional resources being developed to ease the transition into the internship and through the training of company mentors,

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