

# INTERNSHIP FOR ACCOUNTING UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA: INSIGHTS FROM INTERNSHIP PROVIDERS

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*Jayawardene, S (dsajawardene@gmail.com)*

*Kumari, G*

*Warnakulasooriya, P*

*Jayathilaka, N*

*Samankumari, U*

*Samaraweera, D*

*Batagoda, A*

*Abeykoon, S*

*Siriwardhana, C*

*Muthuranga, K*

## **Abstract**

The study utilizes an accounting internship programme to study the perception of internship providers as one of the main stake holders involved with internships. The internship programme selected for the study is two year, 1600 hour, 16 credit programme offered by the Department of Accounting (DA), University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJP). Main purpose of the study is to study the perception of internship providers using four dimensions; skills, benefits, drawbacks and the best practices. Thus, the study is significant on the ground that it is a timely requirement to provide more employable and resourceful graduates. Moreover, the literature available in this area is scarce. A mix research approach has been used based on the post-positivist paradigm. The data has been collected through a semi-structured questionnaire distributed among internship providers. In many local universities, internship for accounting undergraduates have become part and partial in degree curriculum. This study tries to fill the research gap existing in literature on accounting internship by mainly focusing on perspectives of the internship providers on benefits, skills, drawbacks and best practices.

**Key words** – Internship, Skills, Benefits, Problems, Practices, Internship providers

## **1. Introduction**

Students, universities and internship providers are stakeholders in internship programmes (Ruhanita et al. 2013). Gault et al. (2010) states that internship programs provide significant benefits to students in terms of career preparation and income, but also offer valuable advantages to participate in business organisations. Moreover, internships provide students (and faculty) with means of bridging the gap between career expectations developed in the classroom and the reality of post-graduation employment.

At the initial stages of a career, experiential education plays a vital role in elevating prospects of employment candidates, corroborating earlier research suggesting that interns enjoy significant

advantages in obtaining full-time job offers and higher pay. Undergraduates with internship/placement experience are perceived to be better prepared and more marketable to internship providers (Gault et al. 2010).

Warraich and Ameen (2010) highlight that in today's competitive knowledge based economy, the theoretical knowledge of academic subjects is not enough for graduates to survive in the information market. The undergraduates will have to develop market-oriented skills to meet the challenging as well as changing needs of Internship providers. They will have to improve their communication skills, problem-solving attitude, and good knowledge of IT, storage and retrieval of information, presentation skills, and proficiency in English language. They will have to provide services to customers with motivation and commitment. These features will enhance their employability skills

Therefore, undergoing for internships is vital for future accounting professionals in order to build up competencies that is required by the market which will create a solid start to their carrier life. When looking at the Sri Lankan university system there are 15 universities in the country ([www.ugc.ac.lk](http://www.ugc.ac.lk)). Majority of them have accounting degree programmes. There are various internship programmes related to those courses varying from three months to two years.

### **1.1 Problem and Research Questions**

Internship providers are one of the main stakeholder parties engaged in internship programme. Their requirements should be monitored closely to avoid possible conflicts. Therefore, it is important to understand their perception on skills, benefits, problems and best practices relating to the internship. Accordingly, specific research questions identified are as follows:

What is the perception of internship providers regarding, the selected skills that are important to have by a successful intern? the benefits which can be obtained by the interns and the internship providers? the major issues relating to the interns and the DA as the co-ordinator of the internship programme? and the practices adopted by them that can lead to a successful internship programme?

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

Following research objectives have been identified for the research with reference to the internship programme offered by the DA, USJP.

To examine the perception of internship providers regarding,

1. the extent to which they think that selected skills (i.e., soft skills and technical skills) are important to have by a successful intern.
2. the benefits which can be obtained by the interns and the internship providers.
3. the major issues relating to the interns and the DA as the co-ordinator of the internship programme.

4. their practices that can lead to a successful internship programme.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

It is of vital importance to revisit the existing conditions of the internship programme conducted by the DA, USJP. There are signs of existence of gaps between expectations of internship providers and performance of interns by referring to the course coordinators. Internship providers may expect a set of skills which are different from what the interns possessed. Identification of required changes is helpful to modify the existing programme in a practical manner. There is a practical importance in doing that. Also, it would be helpful to upgrade the course curriculum as well.

Remaining sections of the paper is presented as follows. Literature Review is the next section. It is followed by the methodology. Subsequently, analysis and discussion will be discussed. Conclusion, limitations and future directions will be helpful to gain an understanding on the scope of the study.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definitions**

As per Oxford dictionary an internship is ‘The position of a student or trainee who works in an organisation, sometimes without pay, in order to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification’. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016)

According to Billiot (n.d.) ‘an accounting internship is a temporary, entry-level accounting position with a company or firm sponsor’. An accounting internship means that the intern gets the chance to enter the real professional world of accounting while in college (Anon, n.d.).

Furthermore, Inkster and Ross identify that an internship is considered to be a ‘three-way partnership between the educational institution, the student as the intern, and the organisation where the interns take on the challenges of a program of systematic experiential learning’ (Inkster & Ross 1998, p. 6).

### **2.2 Skills developed through an internship programme**

Some researchers have identified different set of skills in their research studies.

Skills identified in the literature are listed below.

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Source</b>
1. Ability to extract and analyse information from variety of sources	Weil et al. (2004); Ballantine and Larres (2004); Jackson and Durkee (2007)
2. Working in group	Weil et al. (2004); Bryant and Albring (2006); Ballantine and Larres (2007); McVay et al. (2008)

3. Computer ability	Paisey and Paisey (2005); Potter and Johnston
4. Meeting deadlines	Robertson (2007)
5. Oral communication	Grace and Gilsdorf (2004); Gardner et al. (2005)
6. Time management	Carr et al. (2006)
7. Problem solving skills	Clayton and Still (2004); Kennedy and Sorensen(2006)
8. Ability to interpret financial information	Montano et al. (2004); Weil et al. (2004); Kennedy and Sorensen (2006)
9. Listening	Tan et al.(2004); Weil et al.(2004); Carret al. (2006)
10. Written communication	Cleaveland and Larkins (2004); Gardner et al. (2005)
11. Critical thinking	Ferguson et al. (2005); Kealey et al. (2005)
12. Coping with stress	Bay and McKeage (2006); Cantopher (2008)
13. Ability to generate practical ideas	Adler et al. (2004); Cullen et al. (2004); Weil et al. -2004
14. Creative thinking	Wynder (2004); Samkin and Francis (2008)

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**Source :** Paisey and Paisey (2010)

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Source</b>
1.Efficient use of information; analytical thinking	} Lim, NC (2015)
2.Structured and systems thinking; writing skills	
3.Logical thinking; efficient use of information	
4.Packaging skills; efficient use of information; creativity/new ideas/originality	
5.Making informed judgement; self-reflection	

Skills	Source
1. Presentation skills	Ameen, N F W K (2011)
2. Good academic record	
3. Good interview skills	
4. Teamwork	
5. Problem solving aptitude	
6. Good report writing skills	
7. IT skills	
8. Online searching skills	
9. Friendly attitude	
10. Learning skills	
11. Achieving professional goals	
12. Plan and organize independently	

As Cord et al. (2010, p.16) suggested in their comprehensive study that ‘[t]he most prominent skill explicitly identified was that of communication skills, followed by teamwork skills. Students noted key differences about working in a group environment within a university setting compared to the demands of team performance in the workplace setting’.

The development of generic workplace skills supports higher education’s engagement in internship programs, as Australian professional accounting bodies expect graduates to display cognitive and behaviour skills such as personal skills, appreciation skills and interpersonal skills (Certified Practicing Accountants and Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, 1996).

### 2.3 Benefits of internship programme

Accounting internship offers benefits for the interns, and as well as to the internship providers. Benefits to the accounting students were highlighted by American Accounting Association (1952). The benefits which were identified are,

1. Broader exposure to accounting techniques and problems that are not encountered in the classroom
2. Improving understanding of the business world
3. Improved ability to evaluate and assimilate classroom experiences
4. Getting a better understanding of the theories learned

Ruhanita et al. (2014) claims that Internship provider, perceived that students benefit from the internship where both the technical and soft skills required in the marketplace were developed.

The knowledge of the resulting benefits and potential skill development attained during internship programmes allows the students to better prepare themselves for internship programme; the university

to counsel students and to determine appropriate changes for their internship programmes; and Internship providers to plan for an effective internship programme (Ruhanita et al. 2014). Internship programmes also benefit the Internship providers in addition to students (Beard 1998, 2007). The Internship provider benefits by having an opportunity to identify possible future employees, developing stronger links with the university, coordinating programmes, and increasing the organisation's image in the community (Beard 1998, 2007).

## **2.4 Drawbacks in internship programmes**

Internship providers may face numerous issues and hardships during the internship programme in despite of the benefits they gain. Henry et al. (2001) in their study, categorize the internship issues in to five categories: work place, working hours, insufficient supervision, ignorance about importance of working and wages.

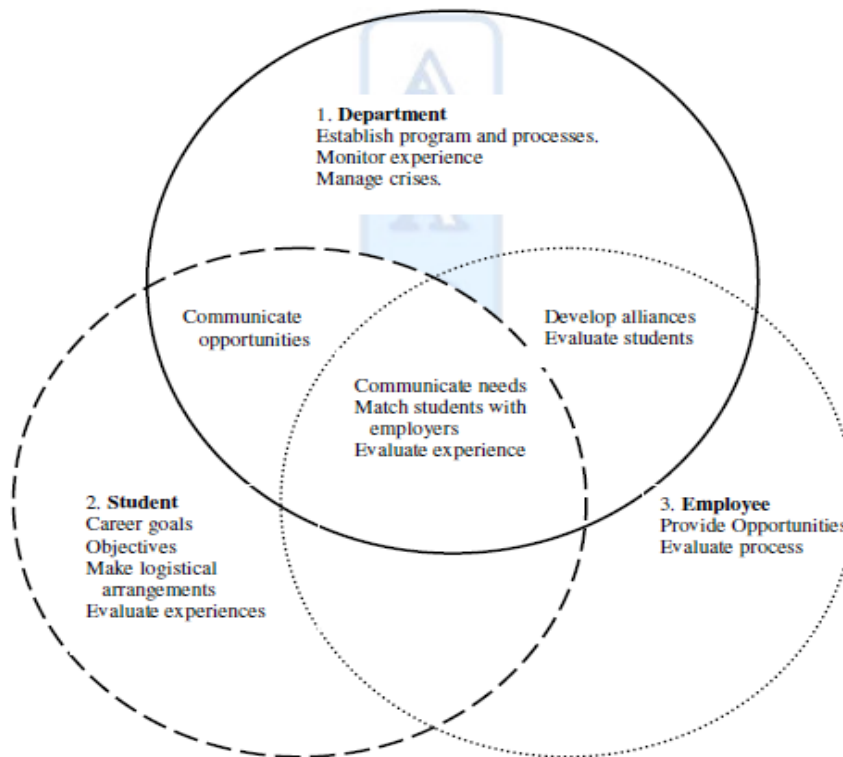
As per Hall et al. in 2000 (cited in Paisey & Paisey 2009) note that students can feel isolated and remote from university so suggest that communication via information technology can address this problem. Calvo (2011) highlights three major issues of internship programmes.

1. The effect of the internship upon academic performance is not clear.
2. The debate about whether or not skills learned in one context can be transferred into another.
3. Lack of an accepted model for evaluating the outcomes.

In addition, Calvo (2011, p.18) point out that 'Many internship programmes are plagued with problems that apart from making the experience unfulfilling leave a bad taste in the intern's mouth and deter others from applying in the future'. From the above findings, it is clear that internship is not suitable for every context and it has mixed advantageous and as well as disadvantageous results. Therefore, in this study the perception of accounting undergraduates about university internship programme was addressed based on USJP.

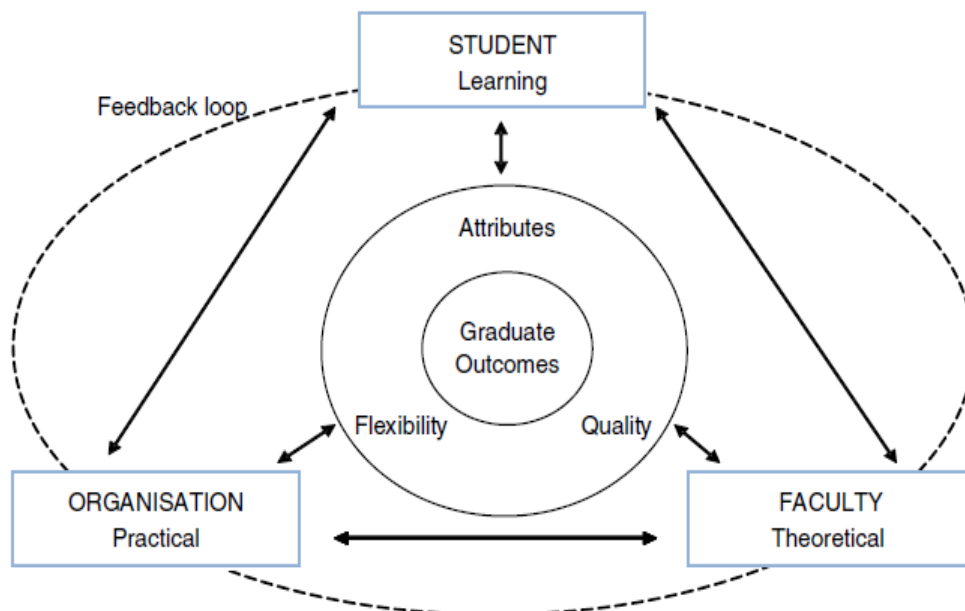
## **2.5 A model on internship**

The model depicted in figure 1 was developed by Divine et al. (2008), which show the importance of relationship and communication between the three key stakeholders (students, academic staff and lecturers) of internship programme. The model depicted in figure 2 was developed by Clements and Cord (2011), which highlights the overall performance of the undergraduates, is based on the learning, practice and theory. The communication among three parties is the key to success of the internship programme, where the feedback loop represents the communication (Ruhanita et al. 2014). Ngat-Chin Lim (2015) claims that an integrated academic assessment with workplace performance appraisal practices can help to address the gap between graduate employability skills and Internship providers' requirements.



**Figure 1 Roles of university/department, student and employee in an internship programme**

Source: Divine et al. (2008) as cited by Ruhanita et al. (2014)



**Figure 2 Model of internship programme**

Source: Clements and Cord (2011) as cited by Ruhanita et al. (2014)

As observed in the above literature, there are number of research studies conducted in the perspective of undergraduates, but they have not considered the perception of academic staff and internship providers regarding the internship programme. Therefore, this study focus on the studying the perception of internship providers regarding the internship programme.

### **3. Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to understand the perception of the internship providers regarding the internship programme offered by DA, USJP. The methodology used is a mixed approach whereas data of qualitative nature (perception) were analysed by using quantitative techniques.

This research study investigates the perception of internship providers regarding the internship program offered by DA, USJP. For that purpose, a sample of internship providers who provide internship opportunities to the interns of DA, USJP was selected and obtained their responses. Responses were collected for different dimensions through semi structured questionnaires distributed among internship providers and analysed them by using various statistical techniques in order to reach the conclusion.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

This research study takes quantitative nature and it was carried out by using quantitative data in order to achieve four objectives of the research stated in “Objectives of the study” in this research article. First data was collected then analysed and finally reached to a conclusion

#### **3.2 Population and sample**

The target population of the research study consists the internship providers representing audit sector and non-audit sector who provide internship opportunities to the interns of DA, USJP. Sample size of research study was 100 internship providers to interns of DA, USJP (60 internship providers from audit sector and 40 internship providers from non-audit sector). Sample was selected randomly on convenience sampling basis.

#### **3.3 Data-collection**

Data for the study was collected through an online questionnaire (primary data) distributed among the participants. The questionnaire was developed based on literature survey at the initial stage. Then it was modified based on expert opinion. A pilot study was conducted thereafter and based on the pilot test some questions were changed. Then it was distributed among the expected sample of internship providers selected for the study. Actual responses were 72 responses of which 44 internship providers were from audit sector and 28 internship providers were from non-audit sector. The respond rate was 72%. Thereafter data was entered into a spreadsheet sequentially to codify the collected data. For the purpose of analysis, collected data was entered into a software called Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).



### 3.4 Strategy for Analysis

As a preliminary analysis, a demographical data analysis was conducted in order to get an idea about the nature of the internship providers who are providing internship opportunities to the undergraduates of DA, USJP. The summary of above analysis is presented in respondent's profile. Then the descriptive analysis and one sample t-test of data was carried out in order to answer the research questions and to achieve the research objectives.

#### Objectives and statistical techniques

Objectives	Statistical Technique
To examine the perception of internship providers regarding,	
1. the extent to which they think that selected skills (i.e., soft skills and technical skills) are important to have by a successful intern.	Central tendency analysis, One-sample t-test
2. the benefits which can be obtained by the interns and the internship providers.	Central tendency analysis, One-sample t-test
3. the major issues relating to the interns and the Department of Accounting as the co-ordinator of the internship programme.	Central tendency analysis, One-sample t-test
4. their practices that can lead to a successful internship programme.	Central tendency analysis, One-sample t-test

All the data collected were coded according to the survey code book and for analysis purpose IBM SPSS was used. First collected data were coded by using MS Excel and the missing values were assigned with value "999". Then in SPSS the variables were defined with the missing values and the data were imported to SPSS. As a preliminary analysis, a demographical data analysis (Respondent Profile) was conducted in order to get an idea about the nature of the internship providers who provide internship opportunities to interns of DA, USJP.

Thereafter, descriptive analysis such as measure of central tendency was performed to identify the extent of the perception of the respondents on research questions and One-sample t-test was performed in order to identify whether the extent of the perception of internship providers on research questions are neutral or not neutral. After that, by analysing central tendency measurement, for the Audit sector and non-audit sector, researchers have identified separately what are the most five and least five important skills, benefits and issues relating to the internship program conducted by DA, USJP and

finally identify the most five and least five important best practices for a successful internship program by the internship providers in order to identify different perception among the internship providers.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of discrete variables that includes the demographical factors are presented at the first and descriptive analysis of the study is presented thereafter. Hence, the analysis is guided by the selected strategy as mentioned in the methodology.

##### a. Respondents' profile

At the initial stage, it was decided to identify the profile of the respondents. Therefore, careful analysis of the table below would generate a deep understanding about the respondents' profile.

**Table 1 Frequency analysis of demographical variables**

Demographical Variable	Value	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Sector	Audit	44	61.1%
	Non-Audit	28	38.9%
Gender	Male	46	63.9%
	Female	26	36.1%
Age	18 - 25 years	12	16.7%
	26 - 35 years	42	58.3%
	36 - 45 years	16	22.2%
	Above 45 years	02	2.8%
Audit	Big three (KPMG, EY, PwC)	27	61.4%
	Other	17	38.6%
Non-Audit	Banking & Finance	17	60.7%
	Manufacturing	08	28.6%
	Other	03	10.75%
Academic qualification	First Degree	50	75.8%
	MBA	10	15.2%
	Diploma	02	3.0%
	MBA, First Degree	02	3.0%
	Ph.D ,First Degree	02	3.0%
Tenure	Below 1 year	09	12.5%
	Between 1 year & 5 years	38	52.8%
	Between 5 years & 10 years	20	27.8%
	Between 10 years & 15 years	05	6.9%

**Source: Author constructed**

At the initial analysis, the researchers identified the classification of the respondents from the sector they belong. The sample consisted of 44 from audit sector and 28 from non-audit sector which represents the real scenario of the internship providers' population of the DA, as majority of the undergraduates are engaged in audit training. As a whole, audit sector represents a valid percentage of 61.1% where as non-audit sector takes 38.9% as indicated in the above table.

On the other hand, 46 male respondents (63.9%) as well as 26 female respondents (36.1%) have been included in the sample. Hence, the researchers have approached the higher-level positions of the organisations, it can be concluded that the male percentage is much higher than the female percentage in the top ranked positions of the most organisations. In addition to the above factors, the researchers have considered on the age classification of the respondents. The highest contribution of the respondents was identified in the age category of 26 – 35 years bearing a valid percentage of 58.3%. Above 45 years' respondents were the least category which were captured through the sample amounting to 2 and a valid percentage of 2.8%. The other age categories identified were fallen in between the above two scopes.

By considering the sector of the respondent, it was revealed through the analysis that 27 responses (61.4%) were from big three audit firms and 17 responses (38.6%) were from other audit firms. This indicates the real scenario, that most of the interns who have chosen audit sector to gain the internship training have engaged with big three audit firms. When analyzing the non-audit sector, it depicted that most responses were from the Banking & Finance industry 17 (60.7%) while the least responses were from the other classification amounting to 3 (10.75%).

Academic qualification of the respondent was another major classification based on which a deep understanding about the respondent can be gained. Most of the respondents bear the first degree academic qualification which amounts to 50 respondents (75.8%), while the least amount was equally spread into Diploma, MBA; First Degree & Ph.D; First Degree which indicated two respondents (3%). Additionally, 15 MBA holders (15.2%) were captured in the sample as well.

The respondents who holds a tenure in the current position for a period between 1 year and 5 years were the highest portion in the sample amounts to 38 responses (52.8%). Respondents who bear the longest tenure in the current position which is between 10 and 15 years were amounted to be the least number which amounts to be 05 (6.9%).

In the light of the total picture depicted through the respondent profile analysis, it can be concluded that most of the respondents were from audit sector, remains to be male respondents, who belongs to the age category of 26 – 35 years, bearing first degree academic qualification and holds tenure in the current position 10-15 years.

## 4.2 Overall Analysis

In the initial stage of analysis, to achieve the objectives of the research, the complete data set gathered by the questionnaires was analyzed. Since, the average perception of internship providers was required to be analyzed, the data were not segregated and instead all the responses were analyzed in whole, using the central tendency measures.

Accordingly, such analysis guided us to get an overall view about the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the skills required to be a successful intern, benefits to the interns and to the internship providers, major issues relating to the interns and to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme and the practices that lead to a successful internship programme.

### 1. Overall Analysis of the perception of the internship providers regarding the skills required to be a successful intern

Out of the four research objectives, our first objective was to “examine the perceptions of internship providers regarding the extent to which they think that the selected soft skills & technical skills are important to have by a successful intern.

Based on the central tendency measure of mean, the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the importance of the skills required to be a successful intern were identified & ranked. The following table depicts the results of the overall analysis done to identify the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the skills required by a successful intern. Based on the mean value, the skills were ranked as the most important to the least important as shown in the following table 2

**Table 2 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the skills required to be a successful intern**

Dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Written communication skills in English	72	4.81*	0.521	1.810*
Knowledge on accounting standards	72	4.78*	0.451	1.780*
Knowledge on accounting standards	72	4.57*	0.601	1.570*
Ability to work effectively in a team	72	4.54*	0.691	1.540*
Punctuality	72	4.53*	0.53	1.530*
Time management skills	72	4.53*	0.691	1.530*
Positive attitude towards work	72	4.51*	0.671	1.510*
Ability to generate practical ideas	72	4.49*	0.692	1.490*
Oral communication skills in English	72	4.4*	0.707	1.420*
Self confidence	72	4.4*	0.597	1.400*

Ability to bear workload effectively	72	4.4*	0.643	1.400*
Ability to analysis an industry	72	4.4*	0.781	1.400*
Skills on extracting and analyzing information from variety of sources	72	4.37*	0.568	1.370*
Ability to lead a team	72	4.33*	0.805	1.330*
IT skills	72	4.31*	0.705	1.310*
Knowledge on tax law	72	4.26*	0.787	1.260*
Friendly attitude	72	4.26*	0.556	1.260*
Report writing skills	72	4.26*	0.787	1.260*
Ability to achieve deadlines	72	4.25*	0.783	1.250*
Logical thinking skills	72	4.19*	0.642	1.190*
Knowledge on other legal and regulatory systems	72	4.18*	0.635	1.180*
Critical thinking skills	72	4.18*	0.877	1.180*
Skills on coping with stress	72	4.17*	0.671	1.170*
Creative thinking skills	72	4.15*	0.643	1.150*
Ability to work with different accounting software	72	4.07*	0.924	1.070*
Problem solving skills	72	4.03*	1.061	1.030*
Skills on organizing independently	72	3.97*	0.731	0.970*
Knowledge on auditing standards	72	3.97*	1.501	0.970*
Ability to adopt to dynamic situations	72	3.96*	0.83	0.960*
Skills on planning independently	72	3.93*	0.738	0.930*
listening skills	72	3.53*	0.903	0.530*

$p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .1$

#### **Source: Author constructed**

#### Mean comparison Analysis

The results of the above table 2, indicated that the extent of the perception of following skills have been highly accepted by internship providers in the overall, since they have the highest mean values compared to the other skills. On the other hand, they believe these skills are highly important to be a successful intern.

1. Written communication skills in English
2. Knowledge on accounting standards
3. Ability to interpret financial information
4. Ability to work effectively in a team
5. Punctuality
6. Time management skills

Apart from that, researchers observed that the extent of perception of following skills have been ranked by the internship providers as the least important skills compared to the other skills. Hence, they perceived that these skills seem to be relatively less important to be a successful intern.

1. Listening skills
2. Skills on planning independently
3. Ability to adopt to dynamic situations
4. Knowledge on auditing standards
5. Skills on organizing independently

#### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the respondents regarding skills required to be a successful intern is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the respondents regarding skills required to be a successful intern is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

To identify whether the perceptions regarding the extent of perceptions of the respondents regarding the skills required to be a successful intern are neutral or not, researchers have carried out One-sample t-test. There, the above results has been obtained in 3 levels of significance such as;  $*p < .1$ ,  $**p < .05$ ,  $***p < .1$ . Accordingly, in this skill perception of the respondents, none of the scenarios has generated results to accept the null hypothesis. Hence null hypothesis was strongly rejected by the results obtained in One-sample t-test in all cases. In conclusion, it can be stated that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the skills required to be successful interns remains to be not neutral. i.e. The perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, almost all the skills' p value were significant, that means null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$  is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception of internship providers on the skills required to be a successful intern are not neutral.

## **2. Overall Analysis of the perception of the internship providers regarding the benefits obtained by an intern through the internship programme**

Our second objective was to “examine the perceptions of internship providers regarding the benefits which can be obtained by the interns and the internship providers.”

#### a. Benefits obtained by the interns through the internship programme

By analyzing the central tendency measure of mean, the extent of the agreement of the internship providers regarding the benefits achieved by the interns through the internship programme were identified & ranked. The following table depicts the results of the overall analysis done to identify the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the level of achievement of the benefits by an intern through the internship programme. Based on the mean value, the benefits achieved by the interns were ranked as the highly agreed to the least agreed as shown in the following table 3.

Further, to identify whether the perceptions regarding the extent of perceptions of the respondents regarding the skills required to be a successful intern are neutral or not, researchers have carried out One-sample t-test. There, the above results has been obtained in 3 levels of significance such as;  $*p < .1$ ,  $**p < .05$ ,  $***p < .1$ .

**Table 3 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the benefits obtained by the interns through the internship programme**

Dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Getting “real business life” experience	72	4.6*	0.548	1.600*
Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying accounting Knowledge to solve real-world problems	72	4.54*	0.691	1.540*
Opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork And problem solving skills etc.	72	4.5*	0.769	1.500*
Opportunity to select a career direction	72	4.25*	0.868	1.250*
Ability to get more future employability opportunities	72	4.21*	0.786	1.210*
Contributing towards overall quality of the degree Programme	72	4.17*	0.605	1.170*
Opportunity to build up corporate network	72	4.06*	0.648	1.060*
Increasing the comprehension of the relevant academic studies	72	3.99*	0.593	0.990*
Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying auditing Knowledge to solve real-world problems	72	3.38*	1.895	0.380*
Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and Administrative influences on organizations	72	3.21	0.992	0.210
Opportunity to earn money	72	3.19	0.914	0.190

$p < .1$ ,  $**p < .05$ ,  $***p < .1$

Source: Author constructed

### Mean comparison Analysis

The results of the above table, indicated that the extent of the perception on following benefits could be achieved by the interns through the internship programme have been highly agreed by internship providers in the overall, since they have the highest mean values compared to the other benefits. They believe these benefits could be obtained are highly accepted by successful interns through the internship programme.

1. Getting “real business life” experience
2. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying accounting knowledge to solve real-world problems
3. Opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills, etc.
4. Opportunity to select a career direction
5. Ability to get more future employability opportunities

Apart from that, it was observed that the extent of the perception on the following benefits have been agreed by the internship providers as the least achievable benefits compared to the other benefits achievable by the interns. Hence, they perceived that these benefits seem to be relatively less achieved by an intern through the internship programme.

1. Opportunity to earn money
2. Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and administrative influences on organizations
3. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying auditing knowledge to solve real-world problems
4. Increasing the comprehension of the relevant academic studies
5. Opportunity to build up corporate network

### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the benefits to interns from the internship providers is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the benefits to interns from the internship providers is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3)***



Accordingly, in the perception of the respondent regarding the benefits to the intern, none of the scenarios has generated results to accept the null hypothesis except for the benefits; Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and Administrative influences on organizations and opportunity to earn money. As per the results obtained in One-sample t-test in all cases except for above mentioned, the null hypothesis was strongly rejected. In conclusion, it can be stated that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the benefits to the interns from the internship programme remains to be not neutral except for the exceptional cases stated above, where the perception is neutral. In all the other benefits to interns, the extent of the perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, almost all the benefits' p value were significant that means null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$  is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception of the internship providers the each benefits to the interns are not neutral.

#### **b. Benefits obtained by the internship providers through the internship programme**

Based on the central tendency measure of mean, the extent of the agreement of the internship providers regarding the benefits achieved by the internship providers through the internship programme were identified and ranked. The following table depicts the results of the overall analysis done to identify the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the level of achievement of the benefits by the internship providers through the internship programme. Based on the mean value, the benefits achieved by the internship providers were ranked as the highly agreed to the least agreed as shown in the following table 4.

**Table 4 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the benefits obtained by the internship providers through the internship programme**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Enhancing the quality of the training organizations' in-house training through collaboration and cross-fertilization of deas with the Department of Accounting	72	4.42*	0.746	1.420*
Promoting a 'learning culture' within the training organization due to engaging highly skilled undergraduates	72	4.24*	0.864	1.240*
Fostering the reputation of the training organization	72	4.17*	0.872	1.170*
Introducing innovative practices within the training organization	72	3.83*	0.904	0.830*

Aiding speedy recruitments for the training organization	72	3.79*	0.918	0.790*
Allowing to improve IT skills within the training organization	72	3.67*	1.075	0.670*
Allowing to improve communication skills within the training organization	72	3.64*	1.052	0.640*
Proving work placement to be cost-effective for the training organization	72	3.6*	0.914	0.600*
Providing an opportunity for the training organization to make a contribution to the community via such placements	72	3.17	1.267	0.17

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$p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .1$

**Source: Author constructed**

#### Mean Comparison Analysis

By analyzing the above table 4, it can be indicated that the following benefits could be achieved by the internship providers through the internship programme have been highly agreed by internship providers in the overall perception, since they have the highest mean values compared to the other benefits.

1. Enhancing the quality of the training organizations' in-house training through collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas with the Department of Accounting
2. Promoting a 'learning culture' within the training organization due to engaging highly skilled undergraduates
3. Fostering the reputation of the training organization
4. Introducing innovative practices within the training organization
5. Aiding speedy recruitments for the training organization

Apart from that, it was observed that the following benefits have been agreed by the internship providers as the least achieved benefits compared to the other benefits achievable by the internship providers.

1. Providing an opportunity for the training organization to make a contribution to the community via such placements
2. Providing work placement to be cost effective for the training organization
3. Allowing to improve communication skills within the training organization
4. Allowing to improve IT skills within the training organization

### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the benefits to internship providers from the internship programme is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the benefits to internship providers from the internship programme is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3)***

In the analysis of the perception of the respondent regarding the benefits to the internship provider, none of the scenarios has generated results to accept the null hypothesis except for the benefits; Providing an opportunity for the training organization to make a contribution to the community via such placements. The null hypothesis was strongly rejected as per the results obtained in One-sample t-test in all cases except for above mentioned. In conclusion, it can be stated that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the benefits to the internship providers from the internship programme remains to be not neutral except for the exceptional case stated above, where the perception is neutral. In all the other benefits to internship providers, the extent of the perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, almost all the benefits' p value was significant that means null hypothesis is rejected (H<sub>1</sub> is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception on each benefit to the internship providers not neutral.

### **3. Overall Analysis of the perception of the internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the interns and the DA as the co-ordinator of the internship programme**

To examine the perception of internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the interns and the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme'' was the third objective of the research undertaken.

In order to get an overall view about the extent of the agreement of the internship providers, all the data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed by using analytical software, regarding the major issues relating to the interns and to the internship providers. The results obtained by such analysis can be interpreted as follows.

**a. Major issues relating to the interns**

Based on the central tendency measure of mean, the extent of the agreement of the internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the interns were identified and ranked. Based on the mean value, the major issues relating to the interns were ranked as highly agreed to the least agreed as shown in the following table 5.

**Table 5 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the interns**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Interns require long study leave	72	4.14*	1.079	1.140*
Interns lack knowledge on Accounting Standards	72	4.12*	0.691	1.120*
Interns are not proficient in English oral communication	72	3.86*	1.025	0.860*
Interns are not client focused	72	3.69*	1.339	0.690*
Interns lack knowledge in written office communication	72	3.65*	1.103	0.650*
Interns lack knowledge on other legal and regulatory systems	72	3.39*	0.958	0.390*
Interns leave the organization without prior notice	72	3.33*	1.151	0.330*
Interns' turnover ratio is high	72	3.33*	1.151	0.330*
Interns lack motivation in providing services to the training organization	72	3.29*	1.119	0.290*
Interns are not familiar with advanced accounting software	72	3.04*	0.879	0.040
Interns require grievance handling	72	3.03*	1.21	0.030
Interns are not proficient in English written communication	72	2.96*	1.215	-0.040
Interns lack professional commitment	72	2.88	1.15	-0.120
Interns lack problem solving skills	72	2.86	0.983	-0.140
Interns lack negotiation skills	72	2.86	0.969	-0.140
Interns lack presentation skills	72	2.76*	1.055	-0.240
Interns lack knowledge on tax law	72	2.64*	1.039	-0.360*
Interns lack team working skills	72	2.46*	1.1	-0.540*
Interns lack IT skills	72	2.17*	0.856	-0.830*
Interns lack knowledge on Accounting Standards	72	1.88*	0.821	-1.120*
Interns lack knowledge on Auditing Standards	72	1.21*	1.074	-1.790*

\* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .1$

**Source: Author constructed**

### Mean comparison Analysis

When analyzing the results depicted from the above table 5, the below points were identified as the major issues relating to the interns as they have the highest mean values above all of the other major issues relating to the interns.

1. Interns require long study leaves
2. Interns lack knowledge on Accounting standards
3. Interns are not proficient in English oral communication
4. Interns are not client focused
5. Interns lack knowledge in written office communication
6. Interns turnover ratio is high

Moreover, the following items depict the least agreed major issues relating to the interns in the overall perception of the internship providers.

1. Interns lack knowledge on Auditing standards
2. Interns lack knowledge on Accounting standards
3. Interns lack in IT skills
4. Interns lack team working skills
5. Interns lack knowledge on Tax Law

### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the major issues from the interns is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the major issues from the interns is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3)***

In the light of the analysis of the perception of the respondent regarding the major issues to the interns, the following items have generated results to reject the null hypothesis except for the major issues; Interns lack professional commitment, Interns lack problem solving skills, Interns lack negotiation skills. As per the results obtained in One-sample t-test in all cases except for the above mentioned case, the null hypothesis was strongly rejected. In conclusion, it can be stated that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the major issues to the interns relating to the internship programme,

remains to be not neutral except for the exceptional cases stated above, where the perception is neutral. In all the other major issues to internship providers, the extent of the perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, almost all the major issues' p value was significant that means null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$  is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception on each major issue to the interns not neutral.

#### **b. Major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme**

By using the results of the central tendency measure of mean, the extent of the agreement of the internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the internship providers were identified & ranked. Based on the mean value, the major issues relating to the internship providers were ranked as highly agreed to the least agreed as shown in the following table 6.

**Table 6 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Lack of proper procedures to handle the of the interns by the Department of Accounting	72	3.94*	1.099	0.940*
Too much emphasis on procedures by the Department of Accounting (i.e., lack of flexibility)	72	3.89*	0.987	0.890*
Lack of promptly addressing issues by the Department of Accounting	72	3.76*	0.847	0.760*
Lack of ability to maintain a good rapport with the internship providers by the Department of Accounting	72	3.61*	1.056	0.610*
Lack of emphasis on practical perspective in curricular by the Department of Accounting	72	3.51*	0.769	0.510*
Lack of co-ordination from the Department of Accounting	72	3.19	1.401	0.190
Curricular not properly implemented by the Department of Accounting	72	3.19	1.043	0.190
Lack of availability of the Internship Co-coordinator of the Department of Accounting when required	72	2.83	1.035	-0.170

\* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .1$

**Source: Author constructed**

### Mean Comparison Analysis

When analysing the results depicted from the above table, the below points were identified as the major issues relating to the internship providers as they have the highest mean values above all of the other major issues relating to the internship providers.

1. Lack of proper procedures to handle the resignations of the interns by the Department of Accounting
2. Too much emphasis on procedures by the Department of Accounting (i.e., lack of flexibility)
3. Lack of promptly addressing issues by the Department of Accounting
4. Lack of ability to maintain a good rapport with the internship providers by the DA

Moreover, the following items depict the least agreed major issues relating to the internship providers in the overall perception of the internship providers.

1. Lack of availability of the Internship Co-ordinators of the Department of Accounting when required
2. Curricular not properly implemented by the Department of Accounting
3. Lack of co-ordination from the Department of Accounting
4. Lack of emphasis on practical perspective in curricular by the Department of Accounting

### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding Major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding Major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3)***

In the light of the analysis of the perception of the respondent regarding the major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme, the following items have generated results to reject the null hypothesis except for the major issues; Lack of co-ordination from the DA, Curricular not properly implemented by the DA, Lack of availability of the Internship Co-coordinator of the DA when required. In all cases except for the above-mentioned case, as per the results obtained in One-sample t-test the null hypothesis was strongly rejected. By considering the above facts, it can be concluded that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the major issues relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme, remains to be not neutral except for the exceptional cases stated above, where the perception is neutral. In all the other major issues relating to the DA as the

coordinator of the internship programme, the extent of the perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, almost all the major issues' p value was significant that means null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$  is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception on each major issue relating to the DA as the coordinator of the internship programme not neutral.

#### **4. Overall Analysis of the perception of the internship providers regarding the practices which lead to a successful internship programme**

The final objective of our research was to 'to examine the perception of internship providers regarding their practices that can lead to a successful internship programme.' Therefore, the data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed using analytical software, to get an overall view about the extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the practices that can lead to a successful internship programme. The extent of the perceptions of the internship providers regarding the practices that can lead to a successful internship programme were identified and ranked based on the central tendency measure of mean. Based on the mean value, the practices were ranked as the mostly agreed to the least agreed as shown in the following table 7.

**Table 7 Overall Descriptive Statistics the extent of the perception of the internship providers regarding the practices which lead to a successful internship programme**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Conduct focus group interviews on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	72	4.36*	0.844	1.360*
Conduct regular monitoring of interns	72	4.36*	0.657	1.360*
Offer regular training within the organization	72	4.32*	0.646	1.320*
Provide interns with a handbook and/or website regarding the techniques/procedures	72	4.31*	0.816	1.310*
Conduct periodical surveys on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	72	4.28*	0.876	1.280*
Conduct regular performance evaluation	72	4.19*	0.573	1.190*
Offer scholarships for needy students	72	4.06*	0.71	1.060*
Provide recognition (Awards/promotions) for best performing Interns	72	4*	0.581	1.000*
Have a dedicated manager for internship	72	2.4*	1.195	-0.60*

\* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Source: Author constructed**



### Mean Comparison Analysis

When analyzing the results depicted from the above table, the below points were identified as the applications agreed by the internship providers as they have the highest mean values above all of the others.

1. Conduct focus group interviews on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training
2. Conduct regular monitoring of interns
3. Offer regular training within the organization
4. Provide interns with a handbook and/or website regarding the techniques/procedures
5. Conduct periodical surveys on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training

Moreover, the following items depict the least agreed applications agreed by the internship providers in the overall perception of the internship providers.

1. Have a dedicated manager for internship
2. Provide recognition (Awards/promotions) for best performing interns
3. Offer scholarships for needy students
4. Conduct regular performance evaluation

### One-sample t-test

The hypothesis of the One-sample t-test is stated below.

***H<sub>1</sub> – The extent of the perceptions regarding the internship providers regarding the practices which lead to a successful internship programme is not neutral. There is significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3).***

***H<sub>0</sub> – The extent of the perceptions regarding the internship providers regarding the practices which lead to a successful internship programme is neutral. There is no significant difference between sample mean and the population mean (3)***

With regard to the practices which lead to a successful internship programme, the results obtained in One-sample t-test, the null hypothesis was strongly rejected. By considering the above facts, it can be concluded that the extent of the perception of the respondents regarding the practices which lead to a successful internship programme, remains to be not neutral. Hence, the extent of the perceptions fall in the above or below scopes of the neutral level.

Therefore, all the practices' p value was significant that means null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_1$  is accepted). Hence, it can be concluded that the mean value of the extent of the perception on each practice which lead to a successful internship programme not neutral.

### **Additional analysis**

The previous analysis was to study the perception of internship providers as a whole, however in this section, the responses are further analysed to identify, the extent of perceptions of the internship providers separately as audit sector and non-audit sector. Since the data set consists of responses from both audit firms and non-audit firms, data set was filtered by using the select cases option in SPSS.

Based on the central tendency measures, it was analysed that to what extent the audit firms & non-audit firms believe that the selected skills, benefits to interns and internship providers, major issues relating to interns and DA and the practices that lead to a successful internship programme are important/agreed.

Accordingly, above areas of the study were ranked as follows based on the mean average value of perceptions. Based on the analysis researchers identified the most important/ agreed perceptions and the least important/ agreed perceptions on above areas categorized as the audit and the non-audit internship providers.

#### **1. The top ranked selected skills required by a successful intern as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

<b>Top ranked Skills – Audit Sector</b>		<b>Top ranked Skills – Non-Audit Sector</b>	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1. Knowledge on auditing standards	4.86	1. Report writing skills	4.79
2. Knowledge on accounting standards	4.86	2. Written communication skills in English	4.79
3. Written communication skills in English	4.82	3. Knowledge on accounting standards	4.64
4. Time management skills	4.8	4. Oral communication skills in English	4.61
5. Skills on planning independently	4.8	5. IT skills	4.57

#### **2. The bottom ranked selected skills required by a successful intern as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

<b>Bottom ranked Skills – Audit Sector</b>		<b>Bottom ranked Skills – Non-Audit Sector</b>	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1. Ability to work with different accounting software	3.77	1. Knowledge on auditing standards	2.57
2. Report writing skills	3.93	2. Listening skills	2.86

3. Listening skills	3.95	3. Ability to adopt to dynamic situations	3.39
4. Problem solving skills	4.02	4. Skills on Planning and organizing independently	3.57
5. Critical thinking skills	4.09	5. Skills on organizing independently	3.64

**3. The top ranked selected benefits obtained by interns and the internship providers as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

**a. Top ranked benefits to the interns**

Top ranked benefits to interns – Audit Sector		Top ranked benefits to interns – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Getting “real business life” experience	4.57	1. Getting “real business life” experience	4.64
2. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying accounting knowledge to solve real-world problems	4.57	2. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying accounting	4.5
3. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying auditing knowledge to solve real-world problems	4.48	3. Opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills etc	4.5
4. Opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills, etc.	4.48	4. Opportunity to build up corporate network	4.21
5. Opportunity to select a career direction	4.32	5. Opportunity to select a career direction	4.18

**b. Top ranked benefits to the internship providers**

Top ranked benefits to internship providers – Audit Sector		Top ranked benefits to internship providers – Non- Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Enhancing the quality of the training organisations’ in-house training through collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas with the DA.	4.64	1. Fostering the reputation of the training organisation	4.11
2. Promoting a ‘learning culture’ within the training organisation due to engaging highly skilled undergraduates	4.52	2. Enhancing the quality of the training organisations’ in-house training through collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas with the DA.	3.93
3. Fostering the reputation of the training organisation	4.2	3. Introducing innovative practices within the training organisation	3.82
4. Aiding speedy recruitments for the training organisation	3.95	4. Allowing to improve communication skills within the training organisation	3.79

5. Proving work placement to be cost-effective for the training organisation	3.8	5. Promoting a 'learning culture' within the training organisation due to engaging highly skilled undergraduates	3.57
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**4. The bottom ranked selected benefits obtained by interns and the internship providers as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

**a. Bottom ranked benefits to the interns**

Bottom ranked benefits to interns – Audit Sector		Bottom ranked benefits to interns – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Opportunity to earn money	2.84	1. Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying auditing knowledge to solve real-world problems	1.64
2. Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and administrative influences on organisations	3.73	2. Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and administrative influences on organisations	2.39
3. Opportunity to build up corporate network	3.95	3. Increasing the comprehension of the relevant academic studies	3.57
4. Increasing the comprehension of the relevant academic studies	4.25	4. Opportunity to earn money	3.75
5. Ability to get more future employability opportunities	4.25	5. Contributing towards overall quality of the degree programme	4

**b. Bottom ranked benefits to the internship providers**

Bottom ranked benefits to internship providers – Audit Sector		Bottom ranked benefits to internship providers – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Providing an opportunity for the training organisation to make a contribution to the community via such placements	3.32	1. Providing an opportunity for the training organisation to make a contribution to the community via such placements	2.71
2. Allowing to improve communication skills within the training organisation	3.45	2. Proving work placement to be cost-effective for the training organisation	3.07
3. Allowing to improve IT skills within the training organisation	3.8	3. Allowing to improve IT skills within the training organisation	3.39
4. Introducing innovative practices within the training organisation	3.8	4. Aiding speedy recruitments for the training organisation	3.39

**5. The top ranked selected major issues relating to interns and the internship providers as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

**a. Top ranked major issues to the interns**

Top ranked major issues to interns – Audit Sector		Top ranked major issues to interns – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Interns require long study leave	4.41	1. Interns are not proficient in English oral communication	3.93
2. Interns are too academic focused	4.3	2. Interns are too academic focused	3.86
3. Interns are not client focused	4.3	3. Interns lack knowledge in written office communication	3.82
4. Interns are not proficient in English oral communication	3.82	4. Interns are not proficient in English written communication	3.82
5. Interns leave the organisation without prior notice	3.77	5. Interns are not familiar with advanced accounting software	3.79

**b. Top ranked major issues to the internship providers**

Top ranked major issues to internship providers – Audit Sector		Top ranked major issues to internship providers – Non- Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Lack of promptly addressing issues by the DA	3.93	1. Too much emphasis on procedures by the DA (i.e., lack of flexibility)	4.21
2. Lack of proper procedures to handle the resignations of the interns by the DA.	3.77	2. Lack of proper procedures to handle the resignations of the interns by the DA.	4.21
3. Lack of ability to maintain a good rapport with the internship providers by the DA	3.7	3. Lack of co-ordination from the DA	4
4. Too much emphasis on procedures by the DA (i.e., lack of flexibility)	3.68	4. Lack of promptly addressing issues by the DA	3.5

**6. The bottom ranked selected major issues relating to interns and the internship providers as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

**a. Bottom ranked major issues to the interns**

Bottom ranked major issues to interns – Audit Sector		Bottom ranked major issues to interns – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Interns lack knowledge on Auditing Standards	1.84	1. Interns lack knowledge on Auditing Standards	0.21
2. Interns are too academic focused	1.89	2. Interns lack knowledge on Accounting Standards	1.86
3. Interns lack knowledge on Accounting Standards	1.89	3. Interns lack team working skills	2.57

4. Interns lack team working skills	2.39	4. Interns lack IT skills	2.61
5. Interns are not proficient in English oral communication	2.41	5. Interns lack professional commitment	2.61

**b. Bottom ranked major issues to the internship providers**

Bottom ranked major issues to internship providers – Audit Sector		Bottom ranked major issues to internship providers – Non- Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Lack of availability of the Internship Co-ordinators of the Department of Accounting when required	2.55	1. Curricular not properly implemented by the Department of Accounting	2.46
2. Lack of co-ordination from the Department of Accounting	2.68	2. Lack of availability of the Internship Co-ordinators of the Department of Accounting when required	3.29
3. Lack of emphasis on practical perspective in curricular by the Department of Accounting	3.61	3. Lack of emphasis on practical perspective in curricular by the Department of Accounting	3.36
4. Curricular not properly implemented by the Department of Accounting	3.66	4. Lack of ability to maintain a good rapport with the internship providers by the Department of Accounting	3.46

**7. The top ranked selected practices which lead to a successful internship programme as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

Top ranked practices for a successful internship program – Audit Sector		Top ranked practices for a successful internship program – Non-Audit Sector	
Dimension	Mean	Dimension	Mean
1. Offer regular training within the organisation	4.43	1. Provide interns with a handbook and/or website regarding the techniques/procedures	4.36
2. Conduct regular monitoring of interns	4.41	2. Conduct focus group interviews on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	4.32
3. Conduct focus group interviews on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	4.39	3. Conduct regular monitoring of interns	4.29
4. Conduct periodical surveys on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	4.27	4. Conduct periodical surveys on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training	4.29
5. Provide interns with a handbook and/or website regarding the techniques/procedures	4.27	5. Offer regular training within the organisation	4.14

**8. The bottom ranked selected practices which lead to a successful internship programme as per the perceptions of the audit and the non-audit sector**

<b>Bottom ranked practices for a successful internship programme – Audit Sector</b>		<b>Bottom ranked practices for a successful internship programme – Non-Audit Sector</b>	
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1. Have a dedicated manager for internship	2.5	1. Have a dedicated manager for internship	2.25
2. Provide recognition (Awards/promotions) for best performing Interns	3.98	2. Offer scholarships for needy students	3.79
3. Offer scholarships for needy students	4.23	3. Provide recognition (Awards/promotions) for best performing interns	4.04
4. Conduct regular performance evaluation	4.25	4. Conduct regular performance evaluation	4.11

To achieve the research objectives, overall analysis for the extent of perception of internship providers was done. Apart from that extent of perception of both audit sector and non-audit sector were also separately analyzed as mentioned in the above tables. The researchers have analysed the extent of perception for both the audit sector and non-audit sector and identified top and bottom extent of perceptions on skills required to the successful interns, benefits to the interns and internship providers, major issues relating to the interns and the DA and application for the success full internship program.

### **4.3 Summary**

This section consists of a thorough analysis of the collected data in accordance with the research objectives identified at the initial stage of the research. First the data were tested for validity and reliability. Then the perception of the internship providers regarding the skills, benefits, major problems and best practices were analysed. In next section, the conclusion and future directions are discussed.

## **5. Conclusion and future research directions**

The study evaluates the perception of internship providers of the internship program of DA, USJP using four main dimensions namely skills, benefits, problems and best practices. For the purpose of analysis, a comprehensive list of skills, benefits, problems and best practices were developed by referring to literature, expert opinion and own experience of researchers. Respondents consisted of audit sector and non-audit sector. Response rate was 72%.

According to the primary analysis, perception was evaluated using central tendency and one sample t-test. Each objective was first evaluated using central tendency measures. Most important skills and least important skills were identified based on the mean value. Then One-sample t-test was applied to check whether the perception of internship providers regarding the skills required for interns is neutral or not.

Analysis results show that their perception is not neutral. Same tests were performed for benefits, problems and best practices. Accordingly, the perceptions were not neutral except for few variables.

To achieve the research objectives, overall analysis for the extent of perception of internship providers was done. In addition to that the extent of perception of both audit sector and non-audit sector were also separately analyzed. The researchers have analysed the extent of perception for both the audit sector and non-audit sector and identified top and bottom extent of perceptions on skills required to the successful interns, benefits to the interns and internship providers, major issues relating to the interns and the DA and application for the success full internship program

This study has been limited to a single degree programme offered by DA, USJP. There are several other universities which have internship programmes incorporated to accounting degree programmes. Also, there are several degree programmes with internships other than accounting. Due to inherent limitations of a research, this is unable to address those areas. Also, respondents can be divided into two main categories as audit sector and non-audit sector. Majority of the internship providers represents the audit sector because many students are employed in audit sector. Therefore, future researches can be conducted to do a comparative study incorporating the expectations of students and the academic staff.

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## Questionnaire

### INTERNSHIP FOR ACCOUNTING UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA (INSIGHTS FROM INTERNSHIP PROVIDERS)

Dear Internship providers,

#### What are we doing?

We are conducting a research to improve the internship programme offered by the Department of Accounting of University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

#### Who are we?

We are a team of researchers from Department of Accounting, University of Sri Jayewardenepura (Team leader – Sathya Jayawardene, 071-4208984)

#### Purpose of the survey

The main purpose of this study is to examine the perception of the internship providers regarding the existing internship programme offered by the Department of Accounting, University of Sri Jayewardenepura in terms of benefits, skills and issues.

#### Who should participate in this survey?

This Questionnaire is to be filled by the middle and above managerial level staff members of the Audit firms and the Non-Audit firms who are currently providing internship training opportunities to the Department of Accounting, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

With much respect, we invite you to participate in our research carried out for this purpose. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous and confidentiality will be ensured. It is much appreciated if you allocate few minutes of your precious time to complete the questionnaire attached herewith.

Please indicate your response by placing a tick " √ "

#### 1. General Information

a) Gender :                      Male ☐                      Female ☐

b) Age :

- 18 - 25 years ☐
- 26 – 35 Years ☐
- 36 - 45 Years ☐
- 45 and above ☐

c) Please indicate the sector that your organisation is engaging in:

##### i. Audit Sector

- Big three ☐ (KPMG, EY, PwC)
- Other ☐ Please specify .....

**ii. Non Audit Sector**

- Banking & Finance ☐
- Manufacturing ☐
- Other ☐ Please specify .....

**d) Please indicate your current designation:**

**i. If in Audit Sector**

- Partner ☐
- Director ☐
- Senior Manager ☐
- Manager ☐

**(ii) If in Non-Audit Sector**

- Board of Directors ☐
- Senior Management ☐
- Middle Management ☐

**e) Please indicate your academic qualifications :**

- Ph.D ☐
- MBA ☐
- First Degree ☐
- Diploma ☐

**f) Please indicate whether you are a member of following professional bodies:**

- |                                | Associate                | Fellow                   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • CA Sri Lanka                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • CIMA                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • CMA                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • ACCA                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>If other please specify</b> |                          |                          |
| • .....                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • .....                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**g) If you are not a member, please indicate your professional qualifications in the following table:**

Professional Course	Level			
	Foundation	Intermediate	Final	Passed Finalist
CA Sri Lanka				
CIMA				
CMA				
ACCA				
Other				
If other please specify .....				
.....				

**h) Please indicate your tenure in the current position:**

- |                          |                          |                           |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Below 1 year           | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Between 10 and 15 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Between 1 and 5 years  | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Between 15 and 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Between 5 and 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | • Above 20 years          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**2. To what extent do you think the following skills are important to have by a successful intern?**

	N/A	Highly Not Important	Not Important	Moderate	Important	Highly Important
i Written communication skills in English						
ii Oral communication skills in English						
iii Time management skills						
iv Problem solving skills						
v Skills on coping with stress						
vi Creative thinking skills						
vii Critical thinking skills						
viii Skills on planning independently						
ix Skills on organizing independently						
x Ability to lead a team						
xi Ability to bear workload effectively						
xii Ability to work effectively in a team						
xiii Ability to interpret financial information						
xiv Ability to generate practical ideas						
xv Skills on extracting and analysing information from variety of sources						
xvi Logical thinking skills						
xvii IT skills						
xviii Ability to work with different accounting software						
xix Friendly attitude						
xx Ability to achieve deadlines						
xxi Report writing skills						
xxii Listening skills						
xxiii Punctuality						
xxiv Positive attitude towards work						

	N/A	Highly Not Important	Not Important	Moderate	Important	Highly Important
xxv Self confidence						
xxvi Ability to adopt to dynamic situations						
xxvii Ability to analyse an industry						
xxviii Knowledge on accounting standards						
xxix Knowledge on auditing standards						
xxx Knowledge on tax law						
xxxi Knowledge on other legal and regulatory systems						
xxxii Others (Please specify) .....						
xxxiii .....						
xxxiv .....						

3. Do you agree that the following benefits could be obtained by the interns through the internship programme?

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
i Getting “real business life” experience						
ii Ability to get more future employability opportunities						
iii Opportunity to select a career direction						
iv Opportunity to earn money						
v Opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills, etc.						
vi Opportunity to build up corporate network						
vii Contributing towards overall quality of the degree programme						
viii Increasing the comprehension of the relevant academic studies						
ix Opportunity to develop their awareness of social, economic and administrative influences on organizations						
x Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying <u>accounting</u> knowledge to solve real-world problems						
xi Opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in applying <u>auditing</u> knowledge to solve real-world problems						
xii Others (Please specify) .....						

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
xiii .....						
xiv .....						
xv .....						
xvi .....						

**4. Do you agree that the following benefits could be obtained by the internship providers through the internship programme of Department of Accounting?**

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
i Promoting a 'learning culture' within the training organization due to engaging highly skilled undergraduates						
ii Providing an opportunity for the training organization to make a contribution to the community via such placements						
iii Allowing to improve communication skills within the training organization						
iv Allowing to improve IT skills within the training organization						
v Aiding speedy recruitments for the training organization						
vi Fostering the reputation of the training organization						
vii Enhancing the quality of the training organizations' in-house training through collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas with the Department of Accounting						
viii Proving work placement to be cost-effective for the training organization						
ix Introducing innovative practices within the training organization						
x Others (Please specify) .....						
xi .....						
xii .....						
xiii .....						
xiv .....						

**5. Do you agree that the following issues can be considered as a major issue relating to the internship programme of Department of Accounting?**

**5.a Major issues relating to the Interns**

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
i Interns are not proficient in English oral communication						
ii Interns are not proficient in English written communication						
iii Interns lack knowledge in written office communication						
iv Interns lack presentation skills						
v Interns lack problem solving skills						
vi Interns lack team working skills						
vii Interns lack negotiation skills						
viii Interns lack IT skills						
ix Interns are not familiar with advanced accounting software						
x Interns are not client focused						
xi Interns lack motivation in providing services to the training organisation						
xii Interns lack professional commitment						
xiii Interns are too academic focused						
xiv Interns require long study leave						
xv Interns require grievance handling						
xvi Interns' turnover ratio is high						
xvii Interns leave the organization without prior notice						
xviii Interns lack knowledge on Accounting Standards						
xix Interns lack knowledge on Auditing Standards						
xx Interns lack knowledge on tax law						
xxi Interns lack knowledge on other legal and regulatory systems						
xxii Others (Please specify) .....						

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
xxiii .....						
xxiv .....						
xxv .....						
xxvi .....						
xxvii .....						

**5.b Major issues relating to the Department of Accounting as the co-ordinator of the internship programme**

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
i Lack of emphasis on practical perspective in curricular by the Department of Accounting						
ii Curricular not properly implemented by the Department of Accounting						
iii Lack of co-ordination from the Department of Accounting						
iv Too much emphasis on procedures by the Department of Accounting (i.e., lack of flexibility)						
v Lack of ability to maintain a good rapport with the internship providers by the Department of Accounting						
vi Lack of proper procedures to handle the resignations of the interns by the Department of Accounting						
vii Lack of availability of the Internship Co-ordinators of the Department of Accounting when required						
viii Lack of promptly addressing issues by the Department of Accounting						
viii Others (Please specify) .....						
ix.....						
x.....						
xi.....						



6. Do you agree that the application of following practices of internship providers could lead to a successful internship programme?

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
i Provide interns with a handbook and/or website regarding the techniques/procedures						
ii Offer scholarships for needy students						
iii Offer regular training within the organisation						
iv Have a dedicated manager for internship						
v Conduct focus group interviews on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training						
vi Conduct periodical surveys on the sufficiency and appropriateness of interns' training						
vii Conduct regular monitoring of interns						
viii Conduct regular performance evaluation						
ix Provide recognition (Awards/promotions) for best performing interns						
x Others (Please specify) .....						
xi .....						
xii.....						
xiii.....						
xiv.....						

**Thank you for your valuable participation.**