

# Internships in Educational Technology Academic Programs: A Status Report

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**Abstract.** The chairpersons of doctoral level educational technology programs were surveyed to determine the current status of internships in their programs. Ninety percent of the chairs responded. The questionnaire gathered the following information regarding internship practices: requirements, placement, participation, characteristics and evaluation. The findings are reported in these categories.

## Introduction

The educational technology field, unlike counseling and some health areas, currently does not require an internship experience as a prerequisite for practice. However, an increasing number of educational technology students (and members of the academic and business communities) are seeking the benefits of an internship experience (Sink & Sari, 1984).

The literature related to internship training in the educational technology field is limited. While several authors discuss the benefits of internship experiences (Bass & Duncan, 1981-82; Deden-Parker, 1981; Rossett, 1981; Sink & Sari, 1984), no information is avail-

able that reports current academic requirements and practices.

This article presents the results of a survey of internship activities in educational technology academic programs in the United States.

## Procedures

A questionnaire was used to gather information regarding internship practices in the following areas: requirements, placement, participation, characteristics and evaluation. The instrument was developed by the authors. It was pilot-tested with faculty at their own institution and with three chairpersons of educational technology programs located elsewhere.

During this process, it became apparent that a variety of terms (e.g., field experience, guided practice, internship, practicum, and apprenticeship) are used by academicians to describe the activities that offer students practical experience outside the classroom as part of their academic training. The authors sought the advice of several educational technology chairpersons to determine the most appropriate terms to use in the study. An internship was defined on the questionnaire as follows: A situation in which the student functions as a professional in an educational technology position (e.g., designer, developer, producer, evaluator) for the purpose of gaining practical field experience.

In the fall of 1985, the survey was mailed to the chairpersons of the 58 doctoral level educational technology programs listed in the 1984 edition of the *Educational Media Yearbook*. Forty-four responded immediately. During the follow-up phase, it was discovered that four institutions no longer offered doctoral programs in educational technology and three programs could not be reached. As a result, the sample size fell from 58 to 51 programs. Following phone calls and a second questionnaire, 46 of the 51 institutions responded, resulting in a 90% return rate.

## Program Description

Student enrollment at twenty-seven (58%) of the programs was 50 or fewer majors (masters and doctoral in the fall of 1985). Ten programs (22%) enrolled 50 to 100 students, and 9 (20%) reported enrollments of over 125 educational technology majors. The majority of respondents (68%) indicated that less than half of their majors were full-time students. Nearly all (92%) expected their enrollments to remain constant or increase in the next academic year.

The population of the communities in which the programs are located ranges from under 10,000 to over one million, with 100,000 representing the median. There was no correlation between size of enrollment and size of community.

## Program Requirements

As shown in Table 1, sixty-three percent of the masters and sixty-five percent of the doctoral programs did *not* require internship experiences, but all master's level (100%) and nearly all doctoral level programs (89%) encouraged their students to participate. A few programs at both the masters and doctoral levels are considering making the internship a requirement.

Of the programs that do require an internship experience, three-fourths said that the requirement could be waived if the student provides evidence of "prior relevant experience." This is true at both masters and doctoral levels. The questionnaire did not request the criteria for waiver.

## Intern Placement

All of the respondents reported that faculty members help place students in internship positions. Over two-thirds also said that students seek their own positions much like a job search.

Ease in placing students in internships was measured by a 5-point scale (very easy through very difficult) and obtained a mean response of 2.0. Twenty-three percent indicated that it was very easy to

place interns, but 5% found it difficult. Eighty percent reported having cooperative relationships with the sponsoring organizations. The types of sponsoring organizations frequently mentioned by the respondents were training departments within large organizations, independent training companies, health-care facilities, public schools, and their own academic institutions.

### Student Participation

Students in forty-two (93%) of the programs participated in internships during the fall of 1985. The number of interns per program was anywhere from 1 to 25 or more; most (76%) programs reported from 1 to 10 interns.

Forty-two (94%) respondents indicated that the current number of interns was the same as, or more than the number during the previous fall. Three programs noted the number was smaller, and one reported that no students had participated in an internship during the past two years.

### Internship Characteristics

The most frequently reported durations of internships were 5 to 10 weeks and 11 to 15 weeks. Some lasted longer; including up to a year. The amount of time an intern spent with the sponsoring organization ranged from less than 8 hours to more than 40 hours per week. The most frequently reported time commitment was 9 to 20 hours per week.

There was no clear pattern of compensation for the interns. The range included no compensation, reimbursement for meals and travel only, wages less than a new employee, and wages comparable to a new hire. Over half of the respondents checked more than one of the above categories, and several stated the amount of pay depended on the sponsoring organization.

With regard to location, the interns were most often placed in organizations within commuting distance of the institution (86%). The locations cited next were their own academic institution (66%), and organizations located beyond commuting distance of the institution (50%). Again, respondents often checked more than one category.

Students completed their internships in a variety of settings. The most frequently mentioned were business and industry (89%) and higher education (80%), followed by elementary and secondary schools (67%), health-care facilities (51%), and government settings (36%). Four programs listed com-

Table 1  
Internship Program Requirements

	MA		PhD	
	No	Yes	No	Yes %
Required	63% <i>n</i> = 29	37% 17	65% 30	35% 16
Not required, but encouraged	0% <i>n</i> = 0	100% 28	11% 3	89% 25
Not required, but considering adding	89% <i>n</i> = 24	11% 3	93% 26	7% 2
Required, but can be waived	29% <i>n</i> = 5	71% 12	25% 4	75% 12

(Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.)

munity and cultural organizations as internship sites.

### Evaluation

Thirty-nine (87%) of the programs reported that their interns were evaluated during the internship experience. They were judged on projects they produced (73%), meetings with the faculty or other persons (60%), and attendance at special classes or seminars (22%).

With one exception, all the programs evaluated the interns at the end of the internship. A variety of methods were used. These included the advisor's judgement of products created by the intern (76%), observations by the faculty members during on-site visits (73%), written evaluations by supervisors in the sponsoring organizations (51%), and student self-evaluations (43%).

Nearly all the academic programs (98%) offered credit for satisfactory completion of the internship. The

amount of credit ranged from 1 to 15 units.

### Discussions

The results of this study provide baseline data on the status of internships at a specific period in the evolution of educational technology programs. The high response rate (90%) to the lengthy questionnaire by busy program chairpersons is evidence of the importance and timeliness of the topic. The extensive, unsolicited comments offered by the respondents on the survey and during phone conversations reinforce this observation. It must be recalled that the study was limited to institutions offering programs at both the masters and doctoral levels.

Taken as a whole, the programs appear ambivalent in their commitment to the concept of internships as academic experiences. While only about one-third of the programs require students to participate, all encourage their students in

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this direction. On the other hand, three-fourths of the programs that require an internship will waive the requirement if the student can show evidence of acceptable prior experience. Finally, despite the uncertainty of the academicians, the facts are that students from 94% of the programs participated in internship positions during the time period investigated and the number of interns was equal to or greater than in the previous year.

Intern compensation and internship duration are two other unsettled areas. Of the various types of organizations that sponsor internships, the only common denominator is their commitment to training or education. Finally, effective and yet practical methodologies for evaluating the internship experience as well as the individual intern's performance are not yet in place.

The rapid development of student internships in the private and public sectors is unprecedented in the history of the educational technology field. Both the academic programs and the sponsoring organizations are cautiously feeling their way in this new venture. As both gain further experience, it is probable that the nature of the internship will also change.

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