

Case Study 5

This case study describes how the Career Centre at the University of Toronto is evaluating a new Communication Internship Program.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	yes

Evaluating the Communication Internship Program, Career Centre, University of Toronto

The University of Toronto Career Centre, recognizing the ongoing need of students especially within the Faculty of Arts & Science to obtain career related experience, piloted a small Communication Internship Program. The goal was to invite organizations having paid or unpaid internship opportunities to come on campus to meet with interested students. 17 organizations and 90 students participated in this program.

Since this was a new program, we knew the evaluation piece would be an essential component in assessing what worked and what didn't, so that decisions about similar future events could be objectively made. We needed to gain an understanding of the program operation from the student's perspective. We also knew that adding the evaluation component would be a great way to document the effectiveness as well as examine the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The Evaluation Tools

A student satisfaction survey was developed by the staff member responsible for preparing the students for the Internship Program, based on existing feedback forms used at the Career Centre but modified to suit this activity.

Student Survey – Communication Internship Program



Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	Students
When the tools were administered	The student survey was done one month after the event
How the tools were administered	Student survey – online through Student Voice
Response rate	Response rate for the Student survey was 41%
Summarizing and analyzing the data	Student Survey – was summarized by the Work Experience Coordinator staff member. Results were calculated through Student Voice

Our Results and Learnings

We have learned overall that the program was beneficial to student and employer participants. This means that we will be repeating the program next year – broadening it to include a wider variety of employer participants.

Staff used the data to inform a program summary that was submitted to the Associate Director. This will inform program goals for the upcoming academic year.

A strength of the tools were that they provided us with an objective feedback system. A weakness is that we have no data at this point regarding impact or longer term effectiveness –i.e. whether participants secured employment or revised their career plans as a result. A learning outcome feedback form should have been added to the student prep sessions, but this was overlooked. Our approach is also missing specific correlations to learning outcomes along with a reflection component.

Through our evaluation process, we learned that we need to build into the program goals the contributions required from the staff members associated with the program. We also need to ensure better coordination between the staff members working to secure the employers and the coordinators on each campus who are responsible for preparing the students, so that we can have a better sense of how program goals and students' expectations meshed. We also learned that ensuring student feedback in larger numbers is something we need to work on.

If we were to do this again in the future, we would start the recruitment process for students earlier, but would continue to gauge employer interest prior to full roll-out of the program as we did this time.

From this experience, we have the following reflections to contribute:

- If you're planning to run a similar internship program, do a pilot. Keep the first one small.
- Pre-determine the touch points with both employer and student groups and how those will be assessed.
- Create your assessment tools prior to program launch.

This tool and overview were submitted by the Career Centre at the University of Toronto.