

Exploring the realization of memorandum of agreements for college internships: Basis for enhancing professional exposure

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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0000-0002-3818-3119**Abstract**

This convergent mixed-methods study assessed how Memoranda of Agreement for college internships were realized in practice and identified factors that enabled or hindered implementation based on the perceptions of student interns and internship coordinators at a higher education institution in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines during School Year 2024-2025. Student interns ($n = 210$) from seven schools and internship coordinators ($n = 6$) completed structured 4-point Likert questionnaires with open-ended prompts. Descriptive statistics summarized Memoranda of Agreement realization and influential factors; between-school differences in student perceptions were examined using Kruskal-Wallis tests with Dunn post hoc comparisons with Holm adjustment, and student-coordinator ratings were compared using Mann-Whitney U tests. Students reported high realization overall (general mean = 3.66, SD = 0.42) and high ratings for influential factors (general mean = 3.61, SD = 0.46). Significant between-school differences emerged for orientation and preparation and for safety and professional environment. No significant differences were found between student and coordinator ratings across influential-factor domains. Thematic analysis highlighted strengths in authentic work exposure, skill development, and supportive supervision, alongside improvement needs related to timelines, coordination, feedback routines, and workplace climate safeguards. Findings support targeted operational refinements to strengthen consistent implementation across internship settings. For institutional practice, the findings support standardized orientation, visible processing timelines, structured feedback, and strengthened workplace safeguards as feasible mechanisms for making professional exposure more consistent across programs and partner sites.

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**Keywords:** college internships, Memoranda of Agreement, mixed methods, program implementation, work-integrated learning**INTRODUCTION**

Internship implementation is a key mechanism through which college students translate classroom learning into professional performance. In higher education, internships are expected to provide structured work exposure, supervised practice, feedback, and opportunities for students to demonstrate competencies

in actual workplace settings. However, internship quality may vary depending on the clarity of responsibilities, the level of supervision, the alignment of tasks with learning goals, and the effectiveness of institutional and partner coordination.

In the Philippines, internship programs are supported by institutional arrangements and Memoranda of

Agreement (MoAs) that define the responsibilities of the higher education institution, host training establishment, internship coordinator, supervisor, and student intern. CHED Memorandum Order No. 104, series of 2017, provides guidelines for student internship programs and emphasizes supervision, monitoring, safety, and appropriate learning experiences. In practice, however, the existence of a signed MoA does not automatically ensure consistent realization of its provisions across schools, programs, and host sites.

The present study examined how MoAs for college internships were realized in practice based on the perceptions of student interns and internship coordinators in a higher education institution in the Cordillera Administrative Region during School Year 2024-2025. The study focused not only on whether MoA provisions were perceived to be implemented, but also on factors that enabled or hindered implementation across internship settings.

Literature Review

Global literature on internships and work-integrated learning emphasizes that professional exposure is most valuable when it combines authentic workplace tasks, structured supervision, timely feedback, and clear learning outcomes. Thompson et al. (2021) noted that internship experiences are shaped by institutional support, opportunity structures, and financial and practical constraints. Similarly, Jackson (2019) and Silva et al. (2018) linked structured workplace activity with employability-related competencies and work readiness.

In the Philippine setting, CHED Memorandum Order No. 104, series of 2017, provides a policy structure for internship implementation. It recognizes that student internship programs should be governed by clear agreements and should protect students while enabling meaningful learning. Local and international studies also show that issues such as weak supervision, limited feedback, misalignment of tasks, and inconsistent coordination can affect how internship arrangements are experienced by students and implemented by coordinators (Awing et al., 2023; Bawica, 2021).

Work-integrated learning quality frameworks likewise

stress the importance of role clarity, monitoring, partner commitment, and feedback mechanisms (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2016; McRae et al., 2019). These studies indicate that partnership formation alone is not enough. What matters is how the agreed internship provisions are translated into actual practices that support student learning, safety, professional growth, and program improvement.

Recent international evidence strengthens this implementation focus. Lasrado, Dean, and Eady's (2024) scoping review of 54 empirical studies found that effective work-integrated learning depends on sustained university-workplace partnerships, active industry participation, clear roles, monitoring, and relationship management rather than partnership formation alone. Ramani and McHugh (2024) likewise found that supervisor support and mentoring, autonomy, and task-goal clarity were associated with interns' perceived developmental value. In a study of 589 engineering and science interns, Gutiérrez-Pulido and Orozco-Rodríguez (2025) reported that structured internship management and systematic follow-up supported practical knowledge application and soft-skill development.

Taken together, the literature consistently identifies authentic tasks, supervision, feedback, role clarity, and institutional-partner coordination as core quality conditions. Recent reviews, however, also identify limited theory use, insufficient mixed-methods evidence, and inadequate attention to workplace and partnership variables (Azila-Gbetor et al., 2024; Lasrado et al., 2024). The present study addresses this gap by examining both perceived MoA realization and the operational factors that enable or hinder it, integrating student and coordinator ratings with open-ended evidence in a Philippine institutional setting.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Commitment-Trust Theory. Kolb's theory views learning as a process where knowledge is constructed through experience and reflection (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). For internships, this means that students learn best when they are given meaningful tasks, opportunities to apply knowledge, and guidance from supervisors and coordinators. Commitment-Trust

Theory explains that strong partnerships depend on trust, commitment, communication, and shared responsibility (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In MoA-governed internships, these are reflected in consistent compliance with agreed responsibilities, timely coordination, reliable feedback, and mutual accountability.

Consistent with these anchors, the study examined MoA realization through domains such as program coordination and support, orientation and preparation, supervision and mentorship, internship responsibilities and assignments, communication and coordination, and safety and professional environment. The study also examined influential factors such as communication, support and resources, alignment and relevance, institutional commitment, environment and culture, and logistics and practicalities.

Significance of the Study

This study provides evidence that may help the University and its partner host training establishments improve internship implementation. The findings may support more consistent professional exposure, clearer expectations, safer placements, and better feedback for students. For coordinators and academic units, the study may guide improvements in MoA monitoring, deployment timelines, documentation processes, and communication with partner agencies or establishments. The study also supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to assess the realization of MoAs for college internships from the perspectives of students and coordinators. Specifically, it determined how students perceived MoA realization and whether perceptions differed by school; the perceptions of students and coordinators on factors influencing successful realization; whether student and coordinator perceptions differed; and recommendations to improve MoA implementation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a convergent concurrent mixed-methods design. Quantitative data summarized student and

coordinator perceptions using descriptive and nonparametric statistics, while qualitative responses explained patterns, strengths, and improvement needs. Integration was conducted through side-by-side comparison of quantitative domain results and qualitative themes, followed by joint interpretation.

Population and Locale of the Study

The study involved college student interns who completed internships during the first and second semesters of School Year 2024-2025 and internship coordinators at a higher education institution in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines. Responses were summarized and compared at the school level to protect privacy and ensure adequate group comparison.

Table 1. *Respondents by School*

School	Interns	Coord.
SBAA	71	0
SEA	12	1
SIHTM	11	0
SIT	28	0
SNS	70	4
SON	4	0
STELA	14	0
SCJPS	0	1
Total	210	6

The school codes were used to maintain compact reporting. One coordinator represented SCJPS, although no SCJPS student intern participated in the survey. The single-institution setting, voluntary participation, self-reported responses, and small coordinator group were considered limitations.

Data Gathering Tools

Two structured questionnaires were used: one for student interns and one for internship coordinators. Both used a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree and included open-ended prompts for explanatory comments and improvement suggestions. Content validity was established through expert review for clarity, relevance to MoA provisions, and coverage of intended domains.

The instruments were also subjected to preliminary reliability testing. The 53-item student questionnaire produced a Cronbach's alpha of .967 based on 30 valid responses, indicating excellent internal consistency. The 24-item internship coordinator questionnaire produced an alpha of .970; however, this estimate was based on

only three valid responses and is therefore interpreted cautiously because the very small sample limits the precision and generalizability of the coefficient. These results supplement, rather than replace, the expert-based content-validity review.

Table 2. *Summary of Survey Measures and Domains*

Block	Main Domains / Content
Intern MoA realization	Coordination/support; orientation / preparation; supervision/mentorship; responsibilities; communication / feedback; safety / environment; recommendation item
Intern influential factors	Communication; support/resources; alignment; institutional commitment; culture; logistics; experience item
Coordinator influential factors	Same six domains and experience item
Coordinator operational context	MoAs managed; implementation status; deployment interval; implementation challenges

Data Gathering Procedures

The surveys were administered through Google Forms, with hard copies used when necessary. The survey remained open for two weeks, with one reminder sent to improve participation. Quantitative responses were encoded and analyzed, while open-ended responses were reviewed and coded for recurring themes. Host training establishment names and identifiable unit descriptors were not reported to reduce re-identification risk.

For qualitative reporting, open-ended responses were reviewed and coded for recurring ideas, and the resulting themes were compared with the quantitative domains during mixed-methods integration. The supplied study records do not establish the use of multiple coders or an intercoder statistic; accordingly, none is claimed. Trustworthiness was supported through convergence checks between the reported themes and quantitative patterns, while discrepant and improvement-oriented responses were retained in the synthesis. During manuscript enhancement, selected verbatim excerpts were retrieved from the de-identified qualitative record, checked against the original responses, and screened for direct and indirect identifiers. Program and host-site references were removed or generalized before inclusion. Coding remained single-analyst; therefore, no intercoder agreement coefficient is reported.

Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were used. Since the scale was ordinal, inferential comparisons used nonparametric tests. Differences in student perceptions across schools were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis H test. When significant, Dunn post hoc comparisons with Holm adjustment were used. Student and coordinator ratings were compared using the Mann-Whitney U test at $\alpha = 0.05$. Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically and compared with quantitative patterns for convergent interpretation.

To supplement statistical significance with practical magnitude, epsilon-squared was calculated for significant Kruskal-Wallis results using $(H - k + 1)/(n - k)$. Approximate 95% confidence intervals around selected overall means were also computed as mean ± 1.96 standard errors for descriptive context; these intervals do not alter the ordinal-scale interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before survey completion. No personally identifiable information was collected. Data were stored securely and reported only in aggregate form. Small cells were suppressed or merged where needed. Any organization names mentioned in open-ended responses were redacted or generalized. AI-assisted tools were used only for writing support and were not used to generate, modify, or analyze data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of Student Interns on the Realization of MoAs

Student interns reported high realization of internship MoA elements. The general evaluation was 3.66 (SD = 0.419), interpreted as Strongly Agree. The strongest domain was Internship Responsibilities and Assignments, suggesting that students perceived their roles, tasks, and learning opportunities as clear and academically relevant.

The approximate 95% confidence interval for the overall student mean was 3.60 to 3.72, indicating that the high-realization interpretation was stable within the student sample.

Table 3. *Domain-Level MoA Realization from Student Interns*

Domain	Mean (SD)	Key Point
Coordination/support	3.59 (0.573)	Clear instructions and requirements
Orientation/preparation	3.74 (0.441)	Strong orientation on rules and conduct
Supervision/mentorship	3.63 (0.543)	Supportive coordinators and supervisors
Responsibilities/assignments	3.78 (0.390)	Authentic tasks and skill development
Communication/coordination	3.56 (0.560)	Favorable but needs stronger feedback routine
Safety/environment	3.69 (0.492)	Safe, respectful, professional climate
General evaluation	3.66 (0.419)	MoA implementation generally realized

Open-ended responses supported the quantitative findings. Students emphasized real-world exposure, professional growth, supportive supervisors, clear orientation, and meaningful workplace experience. These findings are consistent with experiential learning theory, which holds that authentic tasks help transform experience into professional knowledge and capability. The relatively lower communication score indicates the need for more regular performance feedback and clearer communication routines. Representative excerpts included: “We were able to experience what was to be expected when we work for our dream job,” “Hands on project-based tasks,” and “The internship program was very helpful in allowing me to experience in real life what I have been learning at school.”

This pattern agrees with Ramani and McHugh (2024), who linked mentoring, autonomy, and task clarity with internship developmental value, and with Gutiérrez-Pulido and Orozco-Rodríguez (2025), whose respondents reported practical and soft-skill gains under structured internship arrangements. The high Responsibilities and Assignments score therefore supports Kolb's view that concrete, authentic activity becomes educationally valuable when accompanied by guidance and reflection.

Differences in Student Interns' Perceptions by School

Kruskal-Wallis tests showed significant between-school differences in Orientation and Preparation and Safety and Professional Environment. Other domains were not significantly different across schools. This indicates that

MoA realization was generally consistent, but some school-site contexts may need closer attention.

Table 4. *Significant School Differences in MoA Realization*

Domain	H	p	Action Point
Orientation/preparation	14.32	0.026	Standardize readiness checklist
Safety/environment	19.21	0.004	Strengthen climate safeguards

The significant results do not suggest system-wide failure. Rather, they point to specific areas where implementation consistency can be improved. Schools or programs with lower ratings may benefit from more structured pre-deployment orientation, clearer site expectations, and stronger mechanisms for monitoring professional conduct and safety. The qualitative record helps explain these differences. For orientation and readiness, students requested “more comprehensive and targeted orientation programs prior to deployment” and earlier announcements “so that we won't have to suddenly prepare for the requirements.” Workplace-climate experiences ranged from “Very positive & productive environment where I was allowed to grow” to a concern that “communication among hospital staff... sometimes lacked professionalism and clarity.”

The corresponding epsilon-squared effect sizes were .041 for Orientation and Preparation and .065 for Safety and Professional Environment, indicating small but practically relevant between-school effects. These results are consistent with Lasrado et al. (2024), who emphasized that role clarity, monitoring, and partnership management shape the quality and consistency of work-integrated learning. Thus, the significant differences identify targeted consistency issues rather than broad system failure.

Perceptions of Student Interns and Coordinators on Influential Factors

Both students and coordinators rated the factors influencing MoA realization highly. The general evaluation of influential factors was 3.61 (SD = 0.458) for students and 3.63 (SD = 0.368) for coordinators. Mann-Whitney U tests showed no significant differences between student and coordinator ratings across all domains.

For students, the approximate 95% confidence interval

for the general influential-factor mean was 3.55 to 3.67. A comparable interval is not emphasized for coordinators because the group was very small ($n = 6$).

Table 5. *Student Interns vs. Coordinators on Influential Factors*

Category	Student	Coord.	p
Communication / coordination	3.46	3.50	0.834
Support/resources	3.59	3.67	0.961
Alignment/relevance	3.64	3.63	0.553
Institutional commitment	3.68	3.83	0.386
Environment/culture	3.62	3.67	0.862
Logistics/practicalities	3.71	3.64	0.636
General evaluation	3.61	3.63	0.715

The high and aligned ratings suggest that improvement priorities do not come from disagreement between groups, but from the internal contours of the data. Communication and feedback had the lowest relative student score, while institutional commitment appeared slightly higher among coordinators, possibly because coordinators are more aware of back-office processes and documentation efforts. Making timelines, clearances, points of contact, and feedback cycles more visible to students can help narrow this visibility gap. Students made this visibility gap concrete: “The processing of [the University] for OJT student deployment... takes too long,” while another asked for “clear and fast communication between the two organizations.”

The near-alignment of student and coordinator ratings is also consistent with Commitment-Trust Theory: shared perceptions suggest a common understanding of institutional commitment and partner obligations. At the same time, the relatively lower communication score shows that trust and commitment require visible, recurring communication practices; formal MoA provisions alone do not ensure that students experience back-office coordination as timely or transparent.

Synthesis of Qualitative Themes

The qualitative responses confirmed the quantitative trends. Strength themes included authentic work exposure, professional growth, supportive mentorship, clear training structure, networking, and occasional direct hiring opportunities. Improvement themes included deployment delays, uneven feedback, need for better role-program matching, clearer paperwork requirements, concerns about long schedules, and the need for stronger workplace climate safeguards. These

themes reinforce that the internship system is generally working, but can be made more consistent through targeted operational refinements. Feedback emerged repeatedly in students’ recommendations: “Providing consistent feedback sessions to help interns track their progress and areas for growth” and “Getting more feedback from supervisors would help us learn better.” Placement alignment was similarly illustrated by the request for “roles that match our specific specializations.”

Beyond the institution, the findings suggest that higher education internship governance should require evidence of MoA implementation, not merely signed agreements. Quality-assurance mechanisms may therefore track orientation completion, placement-task alignment, scheduled feedback, response time for safety concerns, and annual partner review. These indicators connect administrative compliance with student learning and workplace protection.

The study relied on self-reported perceptions and was conducted in a single institution. Some school groups and the coordinator group had small sample sizes, which limited statistical power and generalizability. To address this limitation, quantitative patterns were interpreted alongside qualitative comments, and small cells were treated cautiously. The coordinator instrument's alpha estimate was based on only three reliability-test responses, and the main coordinator group was also small; coordinator results should therefore be treated as contextual rather than broadly generalizable. Qualitative coding was conducted by a single analyst; therefore, no intercoder agreement coefficient was available. To strengthen qualitative illustration, selected verbatim excerpts were subsequently verified against the de-identified record, screened for re-identification risk, and integrated into the findings. The absence of independent double-coding nevertheless remains a limitation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

The study found that core MoA provisions were generally perceived as realized. Students reported clear roles, relevant tasks, learning opportunities, mentoring support, and safe and professional environments.

Variation was concentrated in the consistency of pre-placement orientation and workplace climate in selected sites. Communication was generally favorable, but routine feedback to interns was the least consistent element. Student and coordinator views were closely aligned, suggesting that the program does not require structural redesign but would benefit from targeted operational improvements.

Recommendations

1. Standardize pre-placement orientation, briefing guide, comprehension check, and signed readiness checklist, with optional program-specific add-ons. Responsible offices: Linkages Office, internship coordinators, and academic units. Timeline: before every deployment cycle. Indicator: 100% of interns complete the common orientation, comprehension check, and readiness checklist before endorsement.
2. Publish service timelines, points of contact, and requirements for MoA processing, clearances, and deployment to reduce uncertainty and improve transparency for students. Responsible offices: Linkages Office and concerned schools. Timeline: update at the start of each semester. Indicator: service standards and points of contact are posted, with at least 90% of complete applications acted on within the published timeline.
3. Schools do a minimum feedback cadence, such as mid-placement and end-placement reviews, using a simple common rubric shared with host training establishments. Responsible offices: schools, internship coordinators, and host training establishments. Timeline: mid-placement and end-placement. Indicator: at least 90% of placements have two documented feedback reviews using a common rubric.
4. Strengthen MoA safeguards on work schedules, rest periods, rotations, safety, and professional conduct, especially for high-intensity sites. Responsible offices: Linkages Office, Legal Office, and schools. Timeline: beginning with the next MoA renewal cycle. Indicator: 100% of new or renewed MoAs contain provisions on work hours, rest, safety, professional conduct, and escalation.
5. Improve program-placement matching through guided student choice, clearer host profiles, and expansion of partner establishments in under-served specializations. Responsible offices: schools and

Linkages Office. Timeline: annual partner mapping before deployment. Indicator: a documented discipline-task match for every placement and a year-on-year reduction in unmatched or limited-placement cases.

6. Reinforce conduct and reporting protocols through confidential reporting channels and rapid response mechanisms for workplace climate concerns. Responsible offices: Linkages Office, Student Affairs/Guidance, and concerned schools. Timeline: before the next deployment cycle and continuously thereafter. Indicator: a confidential channel is operational, reports are acknowledged within two working days, and actions are documented.
7. Reduce operational frictions by streamlining paperwork, medical clearance coordination, travel-aware scheduling, and deployment communications. Responsible offices: Linkages Office, medical-clearance units, and schools. Timeline: process review each semester. Indicator: reduced median clearance-to-deployment time and fewer incomplete submissions.
8. Prepare an annual privacy-protecting internship implementation scorecard aligned with the study domains to monitor MoA realization and guide continuous improvement. Responsible offices: Quality Assurance Office, Linkages Office, and schools. Timeline: within 60 days after each academic year. Indicator: the scorecard is completed, reviewed by management, and accompanied by corrective actions for domains below the institutional benchmark.

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Declaration of Generative AI use in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this converted manuscript,

OpenAI ChatGPT was utilized to assist with restructuring, template alignment, formatting, and language organization. The AI-assisted output was reviewed, edited, and validated by the researcher. The researcher accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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