



Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Ettlin and Sobat

RESPONSE FROM: Senator Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Faculty Internship Programs

MEETING DATE: December 7, 2016

PREAMBLE: Whereas, the McGill Commitment focuses on “providing all students with a stimulating, innovative, and inquiry-based educational experience,” including through “experiential and scholarly learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom and the gates of the University,”¹

Whereas, unpaid internships exacerbate social inequalities by excluding many students who cannot afford to work for free from meaningful experiential learning opportunities;²

Whereas, in the Faculty of Arts, students can only receive course credit for non-research internships by registering in supplementary internship courses supervised by a faculty member, which require the payment of tuition fees;³

Whereas, both the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering Internship Programs recognize paid, *non-credit* internship placements, which are assessed via student and employer evaluations;^{4 5}

Whereas, some Bachelor of Arts & Science (BASc) students have reportedly been rejected from the Science Internship Program due to preference for Bachelor of Science (BSc) students.

QUESTION: 1. Why doesn't the University offer academic credit for recognized professional internship programs, such as those in the Faculties of Science and Engineering?

¹ <https://www.mcgill.ca/principal/five-priorities/mcgill-commitment>

² <http://www.macleans.ca/economy/business/why-unpaid-internships-means-inequality-of-opportunity/>

³ <http://www.mcgill.ca/arts-internships/credit>

⁴ <https://www.mcgill.ca/science/programs/internships>

⁵ <https://www.mcgill.ca/careers4engineers/engineering-internship-program/students>

2. Can the University establish a revised Arts internship or co-op program where students are evaluated on, and receive credit for, internship experiences without the need to register in additional courses?
3. Can the University guarantee that Bachelor of Arts & Science (BASc) students are equally eligible for internship opportunities as BA students in the Faculty of Arts and BSc students in the Faculty of Science?

RESPONSE

Thank you for your question, Senators Ettlin and Sobat.

As indicated on the Internship Offices Network website ([here](#)), students in most programs in the Faculty of Arts can register for an Internship Course to earn credit from their home department as a result of an internship they have pursued on their own or through the Arts Internship office. Normally, Arts students pursue internships during the summer months, and since Internship Courses are usually taken the semester following the successful completion of the internship, the Internship Course is typically part of their fall term course load. While precise requirements may vary between departments, to earn the credit, students would normally write “a major topical paper on an aspect of their internship from an academic perspective.” There is no expectation that Arts students who pursue internships and seek credit thereafter would incur expenses for having to take additional courses. It is expected that the credits earned through the Internship Credit course would count toward the student’s degree program, as a regular classroom-based course would, either as an elective, or possibly as an alternative way of fulfilling a regular degree requirement. Arts students may also apply for a range of Arts Internship Awards to help offset the cost of pursuing an internship during the summer months.

The Internship Credit course, offered in most departments in the Faculty of Arts, awards credit for scholarly work that draws on the internship experience in some significant way. It does not provide credit for the internship experience on its own, which, while certainly valuable, is not necessarily explicitly academic in nature, and is understood to be complementary to the student’s work toward his or her degree.

There is no impediment to BASc students pursuing internships offered through the Arts Internship Office. They are likewise eligible for Arts Internship Awards and make take Internship Credit courses according to the same criteria required of BA students.

While the ‘Science Internship Program’ designation on a student’s transcript is available only to BSc students who complete a Science Internship of at least 8 months or 2 Industrial Practica, BASc students are nonetheless eligible to pursue the non-credit Industrial Practicum courses available through the Faculty of Science. It is important to note, though,

that as the BAsc is its own degree program (and neither BA nor BSc), participation in the Science Internship Program is not possible. That said, the BAsc Program Advisory Committee has indicated a willingness to raise at a future meeting of the committee, the possibility of formal transcript recognition of something like a 'BAsc Internship Program' for BAsc students who pursue both an Arts internship and subsequent Arts Internship Course, and a Science Industrial Practicum.

The internship programs offered through Science and Engineering are not credit-bearing because they are industry-based and do not require scholarly research. Instead of being a credit-bearing component of the degree, successful completion of the Internship Program in either of these Faculties is recognized on students' transcripts as an enrichment of the degrees they have earned, and a valuable complement to their on-campus learning.

Additionally, Engineering is an accredited degree program, with the consequence that students working toward engineering degrees and, ultimately, recognition as professional engineers, must follow a more specific path, with a greater number of required courses, in order to earn the degree. Engineering students already typically complete 133-150 credits in pursuit of a BEng, compared to 120 for a BA or BSc. If the Internship Program in Engineering were credit-bearing, students would have to pay the corresponding tuition to participate, but unlike Arts students, Engineering students would most likely have to earn internship credit in addition to the regular requirements of the degree, and would thus incur additional expense. Students would also most likely have to complete additional academic work, supervised by a faculty member, to earn the credit.
