# The role of internship mentors in office administration practicum: a qualitative analysis

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#### Abstrak

Magang dalam konteks pendidikan profesional tidak hanya berfungsi untuk meningkatkan keterampilan teknis, tetapi juga mengembangkan keterampilan lunak seperti komunikasi, kolaborasi, dan kemampuan beradaptasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis peran mentor magang dalam pelaksanaan magang administrasi perkantoran mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Administrasi Perkantoran (PAP) FKIP Universitas Sebelas Maret angkatan 2021. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif fenomenologi dengan teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam kepada informan yang relevan dan dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran mentor mencakup bimbingan, monitoring, dukungan penyusunan laporan, penilaian kinerja, tanggung jawab program, serta pembentukan hubungan profesional yang menciptakan suasana kerja positif. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan pola pendampingan pada setiap mentor, secara umum peran tersebut berkontribusi pada efektivitas pembelajaran mahasiswa, khususnya dalam mengintegrasikan teori dengan praktik serta mengembangkan keterampilan teknis maupun soft skills. Namun demikian, diperlukan peningkatan konsistensi monitoring, koordinasi, dan proporsionalitas beban kerja agar manfaat program magang dapat dirasakan secara optimal dan merata oleh seluruh mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: bimbingan; kualitatif; mentoring

#### Abstract

Professional education internships serve not only to enhance technical skills but also to develop soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and adaptability. This study examined the role of internship mentors in supporting office administration internships among students in the Office Administration Education program at Sebelas Maret University (Class of 2021). A qualitative phenomenological approach with purposive sampling was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with relevant informants and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion

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drawing. Results indicated that mentors' roles included guidance, monitoring, report preparation support, performance evaluation, program accountability, and the establishment of professional relationships that fostered positive work environments. Although mentorship patterns varied among mentors, these roles generally contributed to students' learning effectiveness, particularly in integrating theory with practice and developing both technical and soft skills. However, improvements in monitoring consistency, coordination, and workload proportionality are needed to ensure that internship benefits are optimally and equitably experienced by all students.

Keywords: internship; mentorship; qualitative research

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## Introduction

Higher education plays a crucial role in preparing human resources who are not only theoretically competent but also possess practical abilities relevant to workplace demands. One strategy employed by universities to bridge the gap between academia and industry is through internship programs. Internship programs constitute an integral component of experiential learning processes, providing students with opportunities to apply knowledge acquired in lectures to real-world work contexts.

The Indonesian government regulates internship programs through Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning employment, which describes internships as "an element within the work training system implemented in training institutions by performing work directly under the direction and supervision of instructors or more experienced workers to achieve mastery of specific skills or expertise." In professional education contexts, internships aim not only to enhance technical skills but also to develop soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and adaptability.

The Office Administration Education program is one of the programs within the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sebelas Maret University (FKIP UNS). According to the Office Administration Education curriculum (2020), learning methods in the program consist of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practicums, fieldwork or practical work, research or development, military training, student exchanges, internships, entrepreneurship, and/or other forms of community service that can be implemented both within and outside the study program. The learning objectives of the Office Administration Education program are to produce educators in office administration, office management practitioners, and entrepreneurs who possess learning skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication), literacy skills (information, media, technology), and life skills (flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, social skills). To support these objectives, the Office Administration Education program organizes three types of internship programs: entrepreneurship internships, office administration internships, and school environment introduction internships. These three internship programs are conducted from semester 5 through semester 7.

First, the entrepreneurship internship program is implemented in semester 5 to prepare students to become entrepreneurs. Students conduct internships at legally registered business entities for one month. Entrepreneurship internship activities include learning production and marketing procedures, leadership practices, business law, taxation, and conducting business activities independently from production through distribution. Second, the office administration internship program is implemented in semester 6 to prepare students to become office practitioners. Students undertake internships for three months at locations such as government institutions, private companies, or multinational corporations. The scope of internships in office administration includes performing tasks in personnel administration, financial administration, equipment and infrastructure management, public relations, archiving, administration, and information systems. Subsequently,

the school environment introduction internship or teaching assistantship program is held in semester 7 to gain direct experience in interacting within school environments, collaborating with teachers/mentors and students, and understanding the curriculum implemented in these schools. Students obtain valid and relevant information that contributes to enhancing pedagogical and professional competencies as well as personal and social skills.

In this study, researchers were interested in examining the implementation of the office administration internship program among the three types of internships conducted by the Office Administration Education program Class of 2021, as this program aligns with the scientific focus of the Office Administration Education program in office administration. This program is also implemented in various cities according to students' choices. Examination of this program can help evaluate its effectiveness in developing students' practical skills and curriculum alignment with workplace needs as related to the roles of internship mentors from host institutions. Additionally, the research can identify challenges faced by students during internships and formulate recommendations for improving program quality.

The Office Administration Education program curriculum (2020) at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sebelas Maret University, was designed based on the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI). This aligns with Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 73 of 2013 concerning the implementation of KKNI in higher education. Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 8 of 2012 also explains that KKNI is a framework that describes various levels of competency qualifications aimed at matching and equalizing education, job training, and work experience to provide recognition of work competencies according to the structure of work in various sectors. Competencies acquired through lecture processes become the foundation for students to understand various theories and concepts in their disciplines. This process is strengthened through lecture activities that provide direct experience in applying theory to real-life contexts. The subsequent internship stage functions to connect academic knowledge with work environments, providing opportunities for students to hone practical skills, build professional networks, and observe industry dynamics directly. Additionally, internship programs are also designed to respond to ever-changing workplace demands and create alignment between the higher education sector and the workplace, as well as to face rapid changes in the future. The implementation of office administration internships represents direct implementation of office administration competencies and is assessed based on its effectiveness in enhancing students' competency mastery (Lisnawati & Adman, 2019). Consistent with findings by Klau et al. (2023), internships constitute activities involving community service, where youth are prepared to apply knowledge they have learned to be ready to face the real career world in society.

The mentor's role is to help accelerate daily learning processes, provide on-the-job training, expand networks, connect students with companies, develop personality, and serve as role models in teaching interpersonal skills (International Labour Organization, 2021). Research conducted by Putri et al. (2023) also revealed that guidance for intern students is very important in maximizing their experience and learning during internship periods. Guidance for intern students also contributes to providing more in-depth and relevant practical experience related to their majors. This mentorship also helps enhance students' technical skills and interpersonal skills, such as communication abilities, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership. During internship periods, students are accompanied by a field supervisor from the Office Administration Education program at FKIP UNS and a supervisor or mentor from the institution where they intern.

Rachman and Widiasih (2024) revealed that mentors are superiors for students interning at companies as new employees. Mentors have significant contributions to intern students' activities in the form of guiding, leading, and showing how to achieve established targets (Rachman & Widiasih, 2024). In supporting internship implementation, mentors have duties including guiding students in work activities, monitoring and evaluating student performance according to predetermined formats. Based on research by Neikirk et al. (2023), the purpose of mentors is to help learners navigate uncertainty, professional difficulties, and life challenges.

The novelty of this research lies in its analytical focus specifically highlighting the role of mentors in implementing office administration internships for Office Administration Education students at FKIP UNS Class of 2021. Whereas previous research has largely examined internship

experiences generally or internship program effectiveness, this research provides new contributions by emphasizing how mentor accompaniment at partner institutions plays a role in developing students' technical and soft skills. Additionally, this research links mentor roles with the relevance of KKNI-based curriculum implemented in the Office Administration Education program, so that research results are not only descriptive but also evaluative regarding alignment between the academic and work worlds. Thus, this research provides new perspectives on the importance of optimizing mentor roles in supporting internship program success while offering practical recommendations for improving experience-based learning quality in higher education.

The research problem formulation is: What is the important role of internship mentors in implementing office administration internships for Office Administration Education students at FKIP UNS Class of 2021?

## **Research Methods**

This research was conducted in the Office Administration Education program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sebelas Maret University, located at Jalan Ir. Sutami No. 36A, Surakarta, Central Java 57126. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at obtaining in-depth understanding regarding office administration internship implementation. Informants in this research consisted of two groups: internship mentors (supervisors from internship host institutions) totaling three people, and student internship participants totaling five people, resulting in a total of eight informants.

The sampling technique employed purposive sampling, a technique in which researchers select participants based on characteristics appropriate to research objectives (Ames et al., 2019), with criteria: (1) students who had completed all internship stages at partner institutions; (2) students who had active interaction experience with internship mentors; (3) mentors who directly supervised students during internship activities. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation techniques and member checking, namely by requesting confirmation of interview results from informants to ensure accuracy of researchers' interpretations.

The main instrument in this research was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on research focus. Interviews were conducted directly and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes per informant. This research was conducted during the period from May to July 2025, encompassing planning, data collection, and analysis stages.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, namely the process of selecting and filtering relevant information from interview transcripts; (2) data display, in the form of thematic matrices or structured narratives; and (3) conclusion drawing/verification, conducted by searching for patterns, relationships between categories, and rechecking obtained data.

## **Results and Discussion**

#### Results

Based on interview results and research findings, the role of internship mentors in supporting internship program implementation can be analyzed through several main aspects: guidance aspects, monitoring and evaluation, support in report preparation, student performance assessment, responsibility for internship programs, and professional relationships and learning:

#### **Guidance Aspect**

Mentors played an essential role in providing direct and effective guidance during internship periods. The availability of mentors for guidance included work direction, work practice, and providing motivation and moral support. This was consistent with statements from Participant 1: "I first ask the intern students what they know about the relevant institution, then after that I provide a general explanation while walking around, then break it down according to their respective majors." This was also aligned with statements delivered by Participant 2: "I usually provide work direction

through learning by doing, so students initially observe, follow, and then understand me at work, then I give them freedom to develop it in carrying out that work." This was strengthened by statements delivered by Participant 3: "I often invite them to sit together, chat, ask what difficulties they have, but in a relaxed condition, never hurt them in the slightest."

Thus, internship mentors in providing guidance and direction each have their own patterns, but also involve emotional closeness with intern students so that the mentoring process can run effectively.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation Aspect**

Monitoring and evaluation by internship mentors aimed to provide constructive feedback on students' work. This was stated by Participant 1: "Monitoring and evaluation through direct communication or creating work papers, listing all daily activities performed." This was also aligned with Participant 3: "Monitoring is conducted while students are doing work, I check periodically, then for overall evaluation when about to start working in the morning the next day when giving assignments for that day." This was also conveyed by Participant 8: "It is conducted when the assigned task has been completed or midway through implementation, so we can evaluate and improve before the task is finished and of course to help ensure satisfactory results." However, Participant 10 stated: "There is none, because the internship mentor actually does not quite understand IT (the tasks given to students)." This was also stated by Participant 11: "There is none, once the task is finished it is just submitted."

This indicates variation in the quality of monitoring and evaluation conducted by mentors, so consistency and competence of mentors in providing accompaniment still need to be improved so that internship benefits can be experienced more evenly by all students.

#### Support in Report Preparation Aspect

Support in report preparation involved internship mentors providing information and relevant explanations regarding the internship institution. According to statements from Participant 1: "I first listen to all their questions; if at that time I can answer and provide data, I execute directly. But if not, I help by bridging them to resource persons who understand better." This was aligned with Participants 3 and 10: "Explaining during free time or during breaks," and strengthened by statements from Participant 8: "Regarding questions, students are usually given opportunities to search first, then if they do not find and have already tried to find access or information, they will usually ask the mentor, and the mentor will also provide answers if students have made efforts to search. If they have not tried and it turns out there are answers that can be obtained without having to ask, students will be directed back to search for those answers again."

This indicates that the mentor's role is not only as a data provider but also as a learning facilitator who trains students' independence, responsibility, and initiative in obtaining information. Thus, mentor support in report preparation contributes to achieving more accurate, systematic reports that meet both academic and practical needs in work environments.

## **Student Performance Assessment Aspect**

Student performance assessment was conducted by internship mentors according to formats provided by students originating from the study program. This was also explained by Participant 8: "The assessment basis is given from assigned tasks and agreed upon or the syllabus provided at the beginning, and then the implementation process with results provided, both from students' efforts to find answers or information needed, then results that meet predetermined standards or achievements. In addition, discipline is also made strict so intern students can be disciplined in entering and leaving work because there is already an application that detects work entry and exit." This was also aligned with statements from Participant 2: "I assess based on responsibility, attitude, and enthusiasm." Participant 3 provided a statement that "Time discipline, courtesy with coworkers, work initiative such as what they do if tasks are finished, dress code, implementation of 5S (Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain) also become the basis for assessment." Based on interview results, it can be concluded that student performance assessment by internship mentors has referred to formats

provided by the study program while considering aspects of attitude, discipline, and responsibility during internship implementation.

## Mentor Responsibility for Internship Program Aspect

Mentor responsibility for internship programs consisted of appropriateness of tasks given to students and ensuring safe work environments for students. This was consistent with statements from Participant 1: "If one division has more than one intern student, then one student will be given one workload by staff from that division. Tasks and workloads are adjusted to the abilities of intern students themselves; if they appear not yet capable, they may be pulled back first, given understanding regarding their work, and told to try again."

This was aligned with statements from Participant 3: "Per day, targets are explained for that day; usually intern students are assigned to help PKWT (fixed-term contract workers)." This was strengthened by statements from Participant 2: "If interning at this office, work orientation is more toward field practice; if in the office, it is brief. It is in accordance with initial agreements. Because at the beginning of internships I usually offer whether they want more time in the office or in the field. I also provide quite comfortable space with tables and chairs as well as freedom and flexibility to move and carry out work satisfactorily." Participants 7 and 11 stated that "Tasks given were in accordance with initial agreements but often experienced overtime during internship implementation."

Based on participant statements, it can be concluded that mentor responsibility for internship programs is manifested through adjustment of task loads to students' abilities and provision of safe and comfortable work environments. However, although in general tasks have been adjusted to initial agreements, some students still experienced excessive workload (overtime), thus indicating the need for more proportional time management and task distribution so that internship experiences remain conducive and effective as learning vehicles.

# **Professional Relationship and Learning Aspect**

This relationship focused on supporting internship program success and student development that supports two-way learning. This was consistent with statements from Participant 1: "Always building good communication. What makes students feel less attended to? I try to always make personal approaches." This was aligned with Participant 3: "We consider intern students like coworkers; we usually do not discriminate." This was strengthened by statements from Participant 8: "Although mentors do not continuously supervise, there are staff who help mentors find out whether intern students experience discrimination or difficulties during internships, and later will report to mentors and evaluate or provide input."

Based on these interview results, it can be concluded that professional relationships established among mentors, staff, and intern students are able to create positive and collaborative work atmospheres. Communication built personally, non-discriminatory attitudes, and support from supporting staff indicate that students are treated as part of work teams, not merely internship participants.

#### **Discussion**

The role of internship mentors is to conduct daily work learning, connect students with companies, and build personality (Kusumah et al., 2023). Hendrajaya (2021) stated that mentors are leaders for students as both students and new staff. Based on interview results, it can be concluded that internship mentor roles have very important contributions in supporting internship program implementation for Office Administration Education students at FKIP UNS Class of 2021. Deschaine and Jankens (2017) revealed that the purpose of implementing administrative internships is to provide deep and varied opportunities for individuals in the field of office administration. In the guidance aspect, mentors provide systematic accompaniment through varied approaches, such as general direction, direct practice (learning by doing), and personal communication that builds students' comfort and confidence. Each mentor has their own style in providing guidance but shares

the commonality of ensuring students understand tasks, are able to adapt, and develop professionally during internship implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation conducted by mentors also greatly help students in the process of reflection and self-improvement. Through methods used by mentors in internship implementation such as direct observation, routine discussions when starting or ending work, and daily activity reporting, students obtain constructive and relevant feedback to improve their work quality. Evaluation is not only focused on work results but also on implementation processes, initiative, and students' work attitudes. Alunaza and Mentari (2024) also stated that the main purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to help internship participants learn from experience, expand practice and activities in the future, accountability of resources in making future initiative decisions.

Internship mentors in students' report preparation serve as information providers regarding systems, procedures, and organizational structures at internship institutions. In implementing office administration internships, internship mentors more encourage students to actively seek information independently first, but the follow-up action is still providing information or directing to resource persons who have deeper knowledge about needed information. According to the Office Administration Internship Guidebook 2024, this office administration internship program replaces classroom learning for one semester. Courses recognized in office administration internship activities are Excellent Service (2 credits), Organizational Behavior (2 credits), Office Ergonomics (3 credits), Office Administration Laboratory Management (3 credits), Office Information System Analysis (3 credits), Office Administration Internship (3 credits), Office Business Simulation (3 credits), and Community Service Program (2 credits).

In the student assessment process, internship mentors have referred to formats provided by the study program, paying attention to discipline, responsibility, attitude, and students' initiative in program implementation. This assessment is conducted comprehensively and objectively, in accordance with study program expectations for student outcomes related to work professionalism, occupational safety and health, ethics and personality, and risk experience. This internship mentor assessment is very important not only for efforts to improve internship quality but also because it relates to the image of educational institutions. Research results by Melati and Dewi (2024) showed that internship programs can enhance positive images of educational institutions where images are formed from students' hard skills and soft skills.

In addition, mentor responsibility is also reflected in their efforts to create work environments that are conducive, safe, and comfortable for students. Task adjustments are given in accordance with study programs and student requests when submitting internship permission applications; task load provision is also adjusted to students' capabilities as well as provision of space and workplaces that still consider students' comfort and occupational safety. This indicates that internship mentors have concerns for students' welfare and learning processes. Implications from Syafitri et al. (2023) also highlight the importance of creating internship work environments that support and motivate students. Improvement of work environments, mentor involvement, and strategies to increase student motivation can be main focuses in improving internship experience quality.

Professional relationships built between mentors and students have generally been implemented quite well by intern students. Students are able to adjust themselves to tasks and functions in their respective internship positions. Although indeed there still needs to be better adjustment in terms of coordination and communication with mentors and staff at internship institutions. Effective communication, non-discriminatory attitudes, and moral support from mentors and other supporting staff create positive and collaborative work atmospheres. This relationship supports realization of meaningful two-way learning and strengthens integration between theory and practice. According to Ufia et al. (2024), internship programs are also assessed as mutual symbiosis where internship institutions gain benefits from assistance of workforce sourced from students, then students also gain advantages in the form of learning and training that can be useful as provisions for entering the work world.

Thus, the overall role of internship mentors is highly strategic and multifaceted. Internship mentors not only carry out technical coaching functions but also become learning partners who shape students' readiness in facing work world challenges professionally, ethically, and adaptively.

### Conclusion

Based on research results, the role of internship mentors in implementing office administration internships for Office Administration Education students at FKIP UNS Class of 2021 has generally attempted to guide students to be able to integrate theory with practice, develop technical and soft skills, and adapt in professional work environments. However, improvements in consistency, coordination, and workload proportionality are still needed so that all students can experience internship benefits optimally and equitably. This research is limited to Office Administration Education students at FKIP UNS Class of 2021, so results cannot yet be generalized to broader contexts. In addition, findings are heavily influenced by students' subjective experiences and diverse internship institution conditions, and have not yet considered other external factors such as organizational culture and institutional policy support.

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