STARTING THE DEBATE ON REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON INTERNSHIP SKILLS GAIN
Virtual Internships: Remote Versus In-Person Internship Skills Gain

Introduction

In early 2020, the pandemic created cataclysmic effects on the workforce. As a result, employers, employees, and students all made the transition to performing everyday work or study tasks from home. We learned that Zoom could serve as a gateway into the home offices of our teachers and colleagues, that supervising, mentoring, collaborating, and getting-work-done could happen online, and that in many ways, work could go on.

It may seem that distractions and a lack of office structure could have an adverse effect on performance. However, a study undertaken by Deloitte, asking staff to rate their work-from-home productivity, suggests that perceived productive capacity is actually not negatively impacted when an employee works from home. In fact, in their findings, “over 70 percent of respondents replied that they are more or just as efficient when working from home. Only 1 in 4 think that their productivity might suffer when working outside the office.”

It is also true that working or interning remotely can offer many benefits, including increased flexibility of working hours. Remote workers have a zero commute (incidentally lowering their carbon footprint), they enjoy the comforts of working at home or perhaps a local coffee shop, and they have the ability to work in conjunction with a full course load, allowing for more flexible internship opportunities.

It appears self-evident that with remote work comes a level of upskilling in digital literacy. Remote interns not only complete work online, perhaps utilizing software that is new to them, but they also need to become proficient in additional software that supports remote working, such as online communication channels and document management programs. Beyond those “hard” skills, remote interns also learn digital professionalism: how to best present themselves for the camera, how to juggle time differences, how to successfully manage their time when a 9-5 schedule is not in place, and how to communicate professionally online potentially in a new cultural setting.
Key Findings

Beyond what appears to be self-evident, little is known about the skills outcomes of remote internships, and if they can successfully compare to in-person internships. Consequently, Virtual Internships, in collaboration with in-person provider CRCC Asia, has sought to compare data from 2019-2020 in skills gain based on the 8 NACE Career Competencies and student self-assessments.

The average difference in skills gain perceived by students in a remote versus in-person internship experience. Showing that virtual opportunities meet the competition of in-person opportunities with Leadership, Communication, Intercultural Fluency and Professionalism/Work Ethic showing almost identical gains.

Post-program, 75% of in-person participants noted increased confidence in obtaining post-graduation employment compared to 88% remote participants.
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1. Remote Versus In-Person Internships AT A GLANCE

When discussing internships, it is important to have a common understanding of what constitutes an internship. For the duration of this report, all internships include the following features:

- A minimum 120-hour position held within an established company or organization with a focus on professional exposure and development.
- Project-based learning experiences that are academically aligned with clear projects and goals stated at the commencement.
- Working in a position clearly designated as an “internship” by the host company or organization.
- Direct supervisor engagement and interaction complemented by consistent opportunities for reflection and feedback.

When defining a remote internship, whether it is labelled a Remote Internship, Virtual Internship, Online Internship, Tele-working, or Telecommuting, it means that the participant will be completing their internship without a commute and directly from their current location.
Remote internships include the same features noted above as in-person internships, and their differences lie in the opportunities and challenges between the two. The graphic below explores this topic in more detail.

### OPPORTUNITIES

#### IN-PERSON INTERNSHIPS
- Exploring Workplace Culture
- Mix of day-to-day projects and larger projects
- “Water Cooler” Networking and Conversations

#### ALL INTERNSHIPS
- Direct industry exposure
- Increased transferable skills
- Career exploration
- Hard and soft skills gain
- Workplace communication
- Exposure to ambiguity that you cannot capture in a classroom

#### VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS
- Structured project-based assignments
- Exposure to digital tools such as Trello, Slack, Zoom, etc.
- Increased accessibility
- Attention to time management and focus
- Mirrors future of work

### CHALLENGES

#### IN-PERSON INTERNSHIPS
- Commute and access
- Administrative work / “Coffee & Copies”
- Increased health and safety considerations

#### ALL INTERNSHIPS
- Supervisor engagement
- Unpacking skills gain
- Lack of intern engagement
- Understanding Workplace Culture

#### VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS
- Increased initiative needed
- Networking may be limited
- Technical issues can halt work
- Risk of Isolation
2. Internship Support Provided by Virtual Internships and CRCC Asia

The end goal for both CRCC Asia and Virtual Internships is for participants to walk away with enhanced employability skills and increased confidence in their ability to secure meaningful employment post graduation. While distinct and separate companies, both were founded by the same leaders who integrated similar supportive scaffolding to enhance program success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Similarities</th>
<th>Program Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Placement Guarantee</strong></td>
<td><strong>Program Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All interns accepted into either program are</td>
<td>While CRCC Asia operates in 10 distinct cities and 6 countries namely in Asia, Virtual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guaranteed an internship in the Career Field or</td>
<td>Internship is not confined to a specific region with placements spanning over 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location of their choice. Participants are</td>
<td>different countries with significant placement numbers in Europe, USA, and Asia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placed in a host company following a linear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placement process that takes into account their</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>skills, goals, and past experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Online Program Curriculum</strong></td>
<td><strong>Online Program Curriculum</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns follow an online employability</td>
<td>While there are similarities in the online employability curriculum the most notable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum to accompany their internship.</td>
<td>difference is a module on international customs and practices for in-person interns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and a module on succeeding at a remote internship for those working virtually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Project-Based Placements with Experienced Host</td>
<td><strong>Individual Coaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies**</td>
<td>Virtual Internship programming includes two coaching calls, at the mid and endpoint,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the location will vary significantly for</td>
<td>to speak directly to the student about their career pathway and goals. While CRCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remote versus in-person internships, all</td>
<td>Asia hosts open drop-in sessions and opportunities for students to schedule a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>companies are vetted with stringent guidelines.</td>
<td>coaching call, it was not built into the specific programming support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These include past experience hosting international interns, and showcasing a strong project placement plan outlining key projects directly aligned to the participants’ chosen career field.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Career Fields

Virtual Internships and CRCC Asia utilize 18 career fields that align a participant’s interests and major to global industries. Career fields include business, finance, engineering, healthcare & pharmaceuticals, legal, international dev & NGOs, marketing, and more.

### Hours Worked Per Week

Both programs give the option of 4, 8, or 12 weeks in duration, with 8 weeks being the favored for in-person and remote alike. Virtual Internships puts a cap of hours worked at 30, allowing students to select between 10, 20 or 30 hours per week, while all CRCC Asia internships are 35-40 hours per week. The timings for remote internships were implemented to account for working across time differences and the lack of downtime often experienced with an in-person role that does not translate to remote work.

### Program Supports

Both programs give the student access to an Intern Experience Manager (IEM). The IEM is available for daily inquiries and ad hoc support. Additional support includes webinars or in-person business seminars, weekly group chats, coaching sessions, and weekly check-ins. For both programs, content delivery and all supports are conducted in English.
3. About the Data

NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) Career Competencies

CRCC Asia and Virtual Internships both offer a career readiness framework rooted in the NACE Career Competencies, that compliments learning in both remote and in-person internships. The NACE Career Competencies focus on soft skills, which ensure transferability across all industries and would be applicable to any undergraduate focusing on career exploration.

The NACE Career Competencies serve as the foundation for all program support and inclusions and form the learning outcomes of the program. NACE defines Career Readiness on their website as: “the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace.” Each competency relates to a skill students can identify and improve upon as they near graduation. An internship is an ideal environment to practice and hone these skills. While doing this, interns are encouraged to reflect and talk about their competency journey. So, by the end of the internship, interns are able to succinctly articulate where and how they made significant improvements.

The competencies listed below are the soft skills that employers increasingly desire in the 21st-century workforce, namely:

- Critical Thinking & Problem-solving
- Oral & Written Communication
- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Digital Technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism & Work Ethic
- Career Management
- Global/Intercultural Fluency
Finding Comparable Data

In framing the program and curriculum support around the 8 NACE Career Readiness Competencies, both programs incorporate a pre and post self-assessment. This assessment includes a series of 3 questions per competency, with an average score for each calculated and reported. Every question includes examples of what the skill would look like in the workplace to allow the student to accurately understand the competency. All interns then self-assess and identify the extent to which they have mastered and use the competency.

The data and outcomes compared in this report are taken from two distinct cohorts of students. The first cohort is participants who completed an in-person international internship with CRCC Asia between April 1st, 2019 and March 31st, 2020. The second cohort is participants who completed a remote international internship with Virtual Internships between April 1st, 2020 and January 21st, 2021.

For the assessments to be included in the data, the intern must have submitted both the pre and post self-assessment, which are identical in wording. The questions delivered to CRCC Asia and Virtual Internships participants included the same wording but differed in scale. CRCC Asia used a 5-point Likert scale and Virtual Internships used a 7-point Likert scale. In order to compare the data, the CRCC Asia assessment was expanded to meet the 7-point scale.

**EXAMPLE QUESTION:** To what extent do you exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems?

What would this look like?
- When you encounter a problem, you investigate to determine the root cause because the problem may be a symptom of a deeper issue.
- When you run into a problem at work, you first brainstorm a few ideas on your own before going to your supervisor.
- When you’re tasked with developing a plan, you gather relevant and reliable data through research and consider potential implications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRCC Asia Likert Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual Internship Likert Scale</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
KEY FACTS:

1. **CRCC Asia primarily supports in-person internships in Eastern Asia** (95% of all participants). Unpacking Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension Theory, these countries often have different Power Distance Index (PDI), focus on Collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and high-context cultures than the participant’s home country which may or may not impact student skill development. Consequently, the Virtual Internships data only includes assessments from internships completed within countries located in Eastern Asia to remove location as a variable.

2. **Both CRCC Asia and Virtual Internships** structure their program durations with participants choosing 4, 8, or 12 weeks. 70% of participants from both samples chose 8-weeks, working full-time (40 hours in-person and 30 hours remotely).

3. **CRCC Asia had 145 students** complete both the pre and post assessment, with 142 having completed their internship in Eastern Asia.

4. **Virtual Internships had 538 students** complete both the pre and post assessment, with 216 having completed their internship in Eastern Asia.

5. **Both assessments asked open-ended questions**, but they were not equivalent or comparable, and therefore while the report highlights some key quotes, no qualitative data was analyzed.

**Analyzing the Results**

All data that was reviewed and analyzed included completed pre and post assessments that were aligned to a placement in Eastern Asia. All students were evaluated for a gain or loss in competencies. A gain is defined as an increase of only one level (for example: some extent to moderate extent) and a significant gain is defined as an increase of two levels (for example: above average extent to always). Similarly, a loss is defined as a decrease in one level (for example: moderate extent to some extent) and a significant loss is defined as a decrease of two or more levels (for example: always to above average extent).
Who Are the Participants?

The data compared in this paper required the consistency that all participants had completed both the pre and post assessments and that all participants had completed either an in-person placement in East Asia or a remote placement with a host company based in East Asia. This resulted in a total dataset of 358 participants, which does not represent a full cross section of the 1041 CRCC Asia or 1592 Virtual Internships participants respectively.

For both programs, 96% of the assessments were from participants completing their undergraduate degree, with 4% completing a graduate degree. Due to the differing assessments, we do not have comparable data on gender or nationality. We are able to provide the geographical region of the participant’s university and their career field focus below.

LOCATION WHERE PARTICIPANT IS STUDYING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>CRCC Student Numbers</th>
<th>VI Student Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe &amp; UK</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US &amp; Canada</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CAREER FIELD PLACEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Field</th>
<th>CRCC Participation</th>
<th>VI Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Industries and Communications</td>
<td>6% (8 participants)</td>
<td>12% (26 participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer, Comp Science &amp; Green Tech</td>
<td>12% (17 participants)</td>
<td>22% (47 participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Business</td>
<td>50% (71 participants)</td>
<td>56% (121 participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>6% (9 participants)</td>
<td>3% (7 participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and Int. Dev.</td>
<td>26% (37 participants)</td>
<td>7% (15 participants)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Pre and Post NACE Career Competency Review

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

With regard to Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving skills, both in-person and remote interns perceived a similar level of upskilling by the end of the internship, both reporting near identical significant gains (18% for remote and 17% for in-person). With parallel gains we can note that while Critical Thinking / Problem Solving is needed in both environments, the way the skills are developed may somewhat differ. We could conjecture here that the need for autonomy, the ability to work alone and figure out issues until contact can be made with a supervisor or coach, forces a remote intern to find quick answers to the work issues they face.

Critical thinking could also be seen as an attribute that is enhanced by remote interns as they need to rely on themselves when it comes to day-to-day decision making, often needing to push ahead with a project without supervisor input.

Conversely, in-person interns enhance critical thinking/problem solving skills by learning to adapt to a professional environment, figuring out how to navigate public transportation when they don’t speak the language, and embracing the full-time commitment to navigate a new culture.

REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON

![Bar chart showing the percentage of interns experiencing different levels of gain or loss in critical thinking and problem-solving skills.]

- Remote: Total Gain: 68%
  - Significant Loss (-2): 3%
  - Loss: 14%
  - No Change: 15%
  - Gain: 51%
  - Significant Gain (+2): 17%

- In-Person: Total Gain: 72%
  - Significant Loss (-2): 14%
  - Loss: 14%
  - No Change: 54%
  - Gain: 17%
Virtual Internships - Remote Versus In-Person Internship Skills Gain

Oral and Written Communication

For **Oral and Written Communication**, remote and in-person interns noted a very similar increase in their ability to interact with colleagues in both spoken and written format (65% vs 66%). For remote internships, this perhaps is a product of less face-to-face daily interactions making it crucial for remote interns to convey their meaning using alternative methods. The absence of daily (physical) conversations can also demand a more precise use of language in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Conversely, those interning in-person are navigating a work environment in English, but in an entirely different culture and country. This can impact a student’s comfort level with communication specifically if the intern is working outside of their native language, with a supervisor who is not a native English speaker or navigating high-context cultures for the first time.

REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significant Loss (-2)</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Significant Gain (+2)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REMOTE</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN-PERSON</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.
Teamwork and Collaboration

With regard to **Teamwork and Collaboration**, the perceived level of upskilling for both groups was very similar (64% vs 68%). With in-person interns edging out the remote interns with a 4% higher gain. This slightly higher gain may be attributable to the increased ease with which in-person work may occur as the physical proximity lends itself to more spontaneous collaborations. The similar increases between the two programs helps to ease concerns that a remote internship does not allow for collaboration and integration, which can be further mitigated by having groups of interns working in teams of up to 4.

**HubSpot** recently surveyed 1000 full-time fully remote professionals from the U.S., UK, Ireland, Australia, and Germany. Of the participants, 45% noted their top concern for working in a hybrid team (partially remote and partially in-person) was team collaboration. With the pandemic, and the rise of online collaborative tools and virtual meetings, this concern may decline as we continue to find increased routes for collaboration.

Of the over 1000 participants that Virtual Internships received an end of program evaluation from in 2020, 58% agreed with the statement “during my Virtual Internship, I was integrated into my host company just as I would have been if I was working in-person,” proving that strong collaboration and connectivity happen remotely.

**REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON**

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<tr>
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<th>Significant Loss (-2)</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Significant Gain (+2)</th>
<th>Total Gain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REMOTE</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN-PERSON</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.
Digital Technology

For Digital skills, it is perhaps surprising that remote interns saw their cyber skills improve less when compared to in-person interns (63% vs 68%).

In-person interns also outscored remote interns when it came to significant gains in digital technology (28% vs 20%).

Although it is true that a certain group of in-person interns was placed in tech-related internships (and surely saw their digital skills ameliorate), all remote interns need to get up to speed with their remote communication platforms, their online chat forums, and perhaps also learn new software to be able to complete their work.

With Gen Z being ‘digital natives’ and extensive users of Tik Tok, Instagram and other platforms, interns may have overestimated their digital skills before a remote-internship. They may have inbuilt confidence with “digital skills” but a remote internship necessitates being an expert with work-related platforms like Google Docs or Trello, and communication tools like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. This may have led to a distinction between digital skills in the workplace vs digital skills for personal use and consequently the need to upskill oneself in a professional setting.
“...For Leadership [...], remote interns noted a similar gain with in-person interns. This is perhaps due to the fact that some remote interns worked in groups and cohorts.”

Leadership

Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

Taking a look at the data for Leadership, we uncover a trend very similar with Teamwork and Collaboration with little difference in upskilling between remote and in-person (67% vs 68%). It would be understandable to assume that an intern working alone at their computer in their home or dorm room would have less of an opportunity to learn leadership skills than an intern who is physically on-site with their colleagues.

However, remote interns noted a similar gain as in-person interns. This is perhaps because some remote interns worked in groups and cohorts. Motivating student teams to work well together and produce high-quality work requires leadership. As the data suggests, quite a large number of remote interns believed they displayed and improved their leadership skills.

REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significant Loss (-2)</th>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Significant Gain (+2)</th>
<th>Total Gain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REMOTE</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN-PERSON</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>68%</td>
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</table>
Professionalism/Work Ethic

Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.

**Professionalism and Work Ethic** skill gain favored remote participants with a general gain of 55% compared to 42% for in-person. The total percent of remote interns who noted a skills gain was 67%, which is 7% more than in-person, which reported 61%.

Looking at the qualitative data this trend comes to light, as one of the most common pieces of advice for remote interns to give future participants is “time-management and to not procrastinate.”

Unlike working in an office, where a seat filled can often be assumed as work being completed, a remote intern needs to focus on their work ethic and motivation in order to ensure focus and success.

**REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSO**

- **Significant Loss (-2)**
  - **REMOTE**: 16%
  - **IN-PERSON**: 21%

- **Loss**
  - **REMOTE**: 17%
  - **IN-PERSON**: 18%

- **No Change**
  - **REMOTE**: 55%
  - **IN-PERSON**: 42%

- **Gain**
  - **REMOTE**: 12%
  - **IN-PERSON**: 19%

**Total Gain:**
- **REMOTE**: 67%
- **IN-PERSON**: 61%

“The total percent of remote interns who noted a skills gain was 67%, which is 7% more than in-person, which reported 61%.”
Career Management

Career Management reported the biggest skills impact in favor of in-person internships with 72% noting a gain, and 33% showing a significant gain, compared to 65% and 22% respectively for remote interns. In unpacking this difference, it is important to note the similarities of the program and placement to include:

- All placements were based on 1 of 18 different career fields that both CRCC Asia and Virtual Internships use to match a student’s interest and major to a company’s industry and tasks.
- Both groups received placements in the same or very similar companies.
- Both groups were placed in the career field of their choice.
- All placements by requirement are project-based tasks and assignments.

While unable to know for certain, this skills difference may be to the very nature of in-person work, and how it is perceived as “real-world work” with students experiencing commutes, office culture, and watercooler interactions for the very first time. While all students are able to complete project-based tasks aligned to their area of interest remote interns may not feel like they have enough information to fully understand the experience’s impact on their career management. Conversely, 67% of all Virtual Internship participants agree that completing a remote internship increased their interest in working remotely in the future, showing an evolution of what they value in a workplace and will consider in their future career.

In correlation with Career Management, all participants are also asked if completing the internship increased their confidence in obtaining post-graduation employment. In this instance remote internship participation led to 88% of participants noting increased confidence, 13% higher than in-person interns at 75%. The underlying reason here could be COVID-19 increasing the awareness and understanding of the future of work at all levels, and more interns more clearly seeing the need to understand hybrid and remote work to standout from the competition.
Global/Intercultural Fluency

Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals’ differences.

The results of the upskilling perception from the Global & Intercultural Fluency competency conceptually counter intuitive, with a higher percentage of remote interns believing they had improved their global and intercultural fluency skills (53%). Whereas, in-person interns rated their skill gain comparatively lower in this area (51% saw a gain and of that 18% thought it was significant).

Regardless, both in-person and remote interns did have to work across time zones, communication styles and culture allowing for intercultural fluency to improve.

REMOTE VERSUS IN-PERSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>IN-PERSON</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“**A higher percentage of remote interns believed they had improved their global and intercultural fluency skills (53%).”**
5. Skills Gain Direct Comparison

Overall, there were predominant similarities in the skills gain for both in-person or virtual internships. While in-person internships showed slightly higher gains in critical thinking/problem solving and career management, this was balanced by parable learning in remote internships and increases in intercultural fluency.

**SKILLS GAIN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th>In-Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking &amp; Problem-solving</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral &amp; Written Communication</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork/Collaboration</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Technology</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism/Work Ethic</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Management</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global/Intercultural Fluency</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Common Hypotheses Reviewed

Intercultural Fluency Will Have a Greater Impact In-Person

As noted in the previous section, Global/Intercultural Fluency did not show higher gains for in-person internships, although in-person participants did have 7% more significant gains than remote participants (18% vs 11%).

We might well ask, how can that be? The vast majority of in-person interns are physically present in an international location, attending an office every day with local co-workers and living in an international setting; whereas most remote interns do not even leave their homes, let alone their countries.

One possible answer for this question is that students preparing for an in-person internship within a designated city would have spent time conducting specific research and planning to experience the city and culture more fully than a student assigned to work in a company located there but remotely. The participant’s preparation may have given a false sense of confidence prior to arriving in the country, with the common effects of cultural shock slightly diminishing skills gain. You can often see this “humbling effect” with language learners who rank themselves as advanced prior to full language immersion, and then move to intermediate. While their skills have not diminished, their understanding of the complexities of language acquisition have altered their self-assessment. Applying the “humbling effect” to those completing an in-person international internship would result in more students showing no skills gain and potentially even more having a decrease in their self-assessment of the skills. This is highlighted by 23% of in-person students moving down a skill level post-program.

Another possible answer may lie in how a professional working in another culture, maybe more focused on the other soft and hard skills gleaned from their day to day work, then the full cultural immersion and understanding gained. Furthermore, international internships themselves may lend to a slightly less focus on intercultural fluency compared to traditional study abroad programs, as they are having to balance professional development with global preparedness.
Digital Fluency Will Be the Top Skill Gained in a Remote Internship

It is natural to think that remote internships will automatically lend themselves to improving digital skills confidence. However, just as with global/intercultural fluency for our data, it seems that tables are once again switched with 63% of remote interns showing a gain compared to only 67% of in-person interns.

One important factor to note is that digital skills, whether remote or in-person, are extremely sought after in today’s world of work. The professional insight platform, Chesamel, recently published an article “Digital Skills for the Future of Work” that underscores the imperative of digital literacy for those entering the workforce and they note that currently, “82% of all job vacancies require digital skills.” And, the Lloyds Digital Skill Index 2020 offers a comprehensive view of UK digital literacy, explaining that although only 7% of the population are offline, the overall levels of digital proficiency are in dire need of improvement. Digital skills do not stop at the remote workers remit, and extend to in-person internships where students will need to learn the company’s systems, communication channels, digital filing and more.

As technology is so ingrained into the daily work of remote interns there is a chance they do not as easily recognize gains in digital skills as in-person interns. Remote interns may see their mastery of digital technology as ordinary and an “everyday skill” and may not understand the significance of their skills gain. Furthermore, internship coaches and supervisors may have pre-existing assumptions that a remote internship automatically leads to gains in digital technology. Therefore they do not focus as much with participants on enhancing these specific skills or having students reflect on and practice articulating their skills gain in this area.
Remote Internships Can Only Work For Specific Types of Internships

Oftentimes when considering remote work, there is a notion that certain industries or projects cannot ever be replicated online as they were in person. This is true, with one recent estimate noting only close to 40% of all US jobs can be plausibly done from home. This makes sense if you consider a server cannot possibly serve you food from the comfort of their own home, nor can a surgeon operate on you without physical presence. But what was once thought of as impossible to be virtual, take telemedicine for instance, is now readily and widely available virtually, and with plans to stay that way.

The same goes for internships to include those in Engineering, Computer Science, and Green Technology. While the focus of projects may shift due to the virtual format, students are still able to gain crucial soft skills, work on major specific tasks at a real company, and build a network of connections aligned to their future career field.

Reviewing data from the 17 students placed in Engineering, Computer Science, and Green Technology for in-person and the 39 working virtually highlights many interesting findings. While critical thinking and career management had stronger impact in-person, students completing virtual internships in these fields were able to increase their oral and written communication. This may be because many virtual projects require an extra level of research with clear communications of this data to their host company. Gains in leadership were made, as students took on individual and group projects to find viable solutions for their host company.

While the data points are still too small to look at the career fields separately, the data helps lay the foundation to show skills outcomes for majors outside of the traditional business fields when working remotely.
Completing an Internship Increasing Confidence in Post-Graduate Employment

For both Virtual Internships and CRCC Asia, at the conclusion of the program, all students were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement on a scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree:

After completing this internship, do you agree this experience increased your confidence in post-graduation employment?

Post-program, 75% of in-person participants noted increased confidence in obtaining post-graduation employment compared to 88% remote participants.

“The internship has provided me with an invaluable international experience in consulting. I am confident that it will give me an advantage over other applicants when looking for a new position.”

-Dorottya Fekete, Goldsmiths, University of London, Business intern in Beijing
Other research by NACE has noted that students with 1 more internship are given more job offers post-graduation than those with no internship. Beyond that, a study conducted by Hart Research found 91% of employers agree that a job candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex programs is more important than his or her undergraduate major and this is reiterated by iCIMs Class of 2020 Report which noted “recruiting professionals agree that past work experience (70%) followed by candidates’ communication skills (61%), and referrals and references (43%) are more important than a college major when hiring entry-level applicants.”

Internships both virtual and in-person are a crucial tool for boosting a participant’s post-graduate employment, and need to be embedded into more university courses, and completed more frequently and earlier by all engaged students.

“My Virtual Internship provided me with many great experiences, but my favorite was the close relationship I got to form with my supervisor and teammates. I am walking away from my internship with new personal and professional connections that will last for years to come. This experience has made me so much more confident in obtaining internship opportunities as well as full-time positions in the future!”

-Lauren Retzloff, Miami University of Ohio, Recruitment & HR Virtual Intern
Starting the Debate of In-Person vs Remote Internships

With the looming uncertainty of 2021 and unanswered questions about the continuing effects of the pandemic, we look ahead to what the new future of work might be. Most agree it will almost certainly include a large amount of remote work and probably a large amount of remote internships. Some are chomping at the bit to “get back to normal” and others embrace this new shift in work culture.

After surveying 317 CFOs, the Gartner survey group found that 74% of them will shift at least a portion of their workforce to remote work in the future. Like it or not, remote work is here to stay, at least to some degree. Given that, and that students need to gain work experience before they graduate, we can begin to consider and understand the differing learning outcomes for students depending on if they intern in person or remotely.

1. The Future of Work is Hybrid - The global pandemic knocked down quite a few assumptions on the feasibility and productivity of remote work, leaving many employees happier without the commute, and many employers, like those noted in the above Gartner survey, considering hybrid opportunities moving forward. This means more positions open to recent graduates will now promote the opportunity to work 1-5 days remotely, while noting the necessity of remote work skills and experience. Students will need to consider how they can gain professional skills both in-person and remotely to stand out from the crowd.

2. More Data is Needed - This report is the start of the great debate looking into skills outcomes from remote and in-person internship experiences. The data has started small with only 358 student self-assessments evaluated in the first instance. Moving forward employers, universities, students, and providers will need to work together to better capture and report skills gain for both in-person and remote internships. This data allows stakeholders to better understand the trends, and how to build the correct support and guidance around the program.

3. Both In-Person and Remote Internships Have Shown No Significant Differences in Skills Gain - Reviewing the data for in-person and remote internships shows that in all skills at least 50% of participants noted an increase in their skills with an average 21% of participants experiencing a significant increase (increase of 2 or more scales, above average extent to always for example). Internships, regardless of type, are an extremely important experiential learning activity for students to complete. These work experiences allow them to enhance soft skills, build a network, and experience the ambiguity of professional work that only a direct unsimulated internship can provide.

7. Conclusion
CRCC Asia specializes in connecting students with applied work experience in dynamic international settings. With over 12 years experience working in Asia, we have led internship programs for over 9,000+ students and graduates from more than 100 countries. We offer a range of program models built to satisfy the interests of each of our partner institutions, including a wide range of unique custom and faculty-led programming. Over our 12 years we have curated a portfolio of partners and companies to include our sister company, Virtual Internships.

Virtual Internships started in 2018 after recognizing that the future of work was at our doorstep, and more students across the world would need to prepare for remote work experience as well as create a network of virtual connections to succeed. Students can work in 18 different career fields with companies spanning over 70 different countries.

Throughout the past 2 years, VI has supported over 1800 students in accessing remote internship experiences.

Rachael Criso, Independent Consultant, Global Internship Consultancy
Rachael Criso, Ph.D. is a consultant working within the realm of international internships, advising on global work experience, professional development, academic integrity for engaged learning, employability, and global networking.

Having inaugurated, implemented, and run a successful international internship program at the University of Michigan where she also pioneered one of the first Virtual Internship programs, Rachael now advises students, university representatives, professionals, and companies on best practices, innovative programs, and career readiness with respect to both on-site and virtual internships.

Jillian Low, Chief Academic Officer, Virtual Internships
Jillian is the Chief Academic Officer at Virtual Internships where Jillian leads in the development of partnerships worldwide supporting building standard and custom internship programs virtually. In creating engaging and meaningful content Jillian has delivered sessions at the Global Internship Conference, NAFSA, Cooperative Education & Internship Association, and directly at universities supporting professional development best practices, international internship understanding, and key data and outcomes. Jillian holds an MA from UCL in International Development and Education.

Kelen Townsend, Partnership Development Manager, Virtual Internships
Kelen is a Partnership Development Manager at Virtual Internships, where she works in supporting university partners to create custom virtual internship programming for their students. Kelen holds a MS from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Counselor Education with a focus on College Counseling and Student Development in Higher Education. In supporting student growth and development, Kelen’s previous experience includes working in Mental Health, Career Services, and International Education.
Virtual Internships - Remote Versus In-Person Internship Skills Gain

For more information on our virtual internship programming and support, head to www.virtualinternships.com. Virtual Internships works with companies and universities across the globe to curate custom internship programs remotely and be a thought-leader in the field of remote work and remote professional development. If you would like more information, please reach out to hello@virtualinternships.com.