

Reading Internship Evaluations Across Liberal Arts Programs: A Comparative Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Internships have become a central feature of undergraduate education, yet the evaluative documents produced at their close remain under-examined as data in their own right. This qualitative comparative case study analyses the site supervisor narratives written on internship evaluation forms across three liberal arts degree programs at a single Philippine higher education institution: the Bachelor of Science in Psychology (BSP), the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (ABPOLSCI), and the Bachelor of Arts in Communication (BACOMM). The unit of analysis is the individual supervisor narrative entry, a single free-text evaluative comment written by one site supervisor about one intern. A total of 230 narrative entries (BSP, $n = 100$; ABPOLSCI, $n = 70$; BACOMM, $n = 60$), extracted from completed internship evaluation forms across five academic years, were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis within and across cases to examine what supervisors foreground when they write about emerging practitioners. Findings reveal a thin shared vocabulary of generic employability themes, such as work ethic, willingness to learn, team collaboration, and communication, beneath which three distinct evaluative registers operate: an ethical–dispositional register in BSP, an institutional–trajectorial register in ABPOLSCI, and a creative–portfolio register in BACOMM. Extending Shulman’s concept of signature pedagogies, the study proposes that professions possess signature assessments: discipline-specific evaluative genres through which fields articulate competent practice. The findings caution against standardized evaluation templates and support discipline-sensitive designs that preserve narrative specificity while identifying legitimate bases for cross-program comparability.

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1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, internships have moved from the periphery of higher education to its organizing center. Once treated as an optional supplement to the classroom, they are now routinely embedded within degree requirements, promoted in recruitment materials, and counted among the indicators by which universities measure their graduates' readiness for professional life. National governments, accrediting bodies, and employer consortia have added pressure of their own, framing internships as a primary mechanism for closing the so-called skills gap between higher education and the labor market (Jackson, 2015; Patrick et al., 2009). The result is a remarkable convergence: whether a student is enrolled in engineering, social work, accounting, nursing, or the creative arts, they are increasingly likely to spend a defined period of their degree working under the dual supervision of an academic institution and an external host organization. That convergence, however, conceals significant disciplinary variation in how internships are conceived, structured, supervised, assessed, and, ultimately, evaluated.

The stakes attached to these experiences are considerable. For students, an internship may represent the first sustained encounter with a professional community and the most resource-intensive component of their degree in terms of time, emotional investment, and, in some jurisdictions, direct cost. For host organizations, interns function as both contributors to current work and candidates for future employment, creating a pipeline that many sectors rely upon. For universities, internships are simultaneously pedagogical devices, reputational assets, and administrative burdens, requiring coordination across academic departments, career services, legal offices, and external partners. Given these overlapping investments, the question of how internships are evaluated, by whom, against what standards, and with what consequences, is not a narrow technical matter. It is a question about what higher education values in the moment that theory meets practice.

Evaluation practices in internship contexts have attracted growing scholarly attention, but the literature remains uneven. A substantial body of work documents the benefits students report after completing an internship: enhanced employability, clearer career direction, expanded professional networks, and increased confidence (Silva et al., 2018; Jackson & Collings, 2018). A parallel strand examines employer perspectives, often foregrounding the generic competencies, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, that organizations claim to value (Jackson, 2015; Wilton, 2012). A smaller but influential literature investigates the design features that distinguish high-quality placements from those that fail to produce meaningful learning, pointing to factors such as the quality of supervision, the authenticity of tasks, the integration between workplace and curriculum, and the provision of structured reflection (Billett, 2011; Stirling et al., 2016). What has received comparatively less sustained attention is the evaluative infrastructure itself: the forms, rubrics, narrative reports, reflective journals, site visit notes, and final written assessments through which internship performance is rendered legible to the university. These documents are not neutral records. They encode assumptions about what counts as professional competence, how learning can be evidenced, and whose voice, the student's, the site supervisor's, the academic's, is authoritative at which moments.

When researchers have attended to evaluation materials, they have typically done so within the boundaries of a single program, a single institution, or a single professional field. This work has generated important insights. Studies within nursing, for example, have shown how clinical evaluation tools can privilege technical proficiency at the expense of relational and ethical dimensions of practice (Helminen et al., 2016). Research in teacher education has documented the ways evaluation narratives construct particular images of the "good teacher" that shape both student self-understanding and supervisor judgment (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). Scholarship in business and accounting programs has examined the alignment between evaluation criteria and industry-defined competency frameworks, often finding tensions between educational and employer logics (Jackson, 2017). What is striking, when these literatures are read alongside one another, is how rarely they are read alongside one another. Comparative studies that place evaluation practices from different disciplines in direct analytical conversation are scarce, despite repeated calls for such work (Billett, 2014; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

This absence matters for several reasons. First, the assumption that internships function similarly across fields is empirically suspect. Shulman's (2005) concept of "signature pedagogies" reminds us that professional fields develop

characteristic ways of training newcomers that reflect their distinctive epistemologies, ethical traditions, and relationships to practice. A law school's moot court, a medical school's clinical rotation, a fine arts program's studio critique, and an engineering program's design project are not interchangeable instructional formats; they embody different theories of what it means to know, to act, and to belong within a profession. There is every reason to expect that internship evaluation, as a form of signature assessment, will similarly vary, and that this variation will carry pedagogical, political, and practical consequences. Second, without comparative work, institutions and policy-makers risk transferring evaluation practices across contexts in which they may be poorly suited. The migration of competency-based rubrics from one disciplinary home to another, or the imposition of standardized institutional templates across heterogeneous programs, proceeds without a strong evidentiary base. Third, and most fundamentally, the absence of cross-disciplinary comparison narrows our theoretical vocabulary. When the same phenomenon is examined only within field-specific silos, it becomes difficult to distinguish what is universal to internship evaluation from what is particular to a given professional tradition.

The present study responds to this gap through a comparative case study of qualitative internship evaluation data drawn from three degree programs of the College of Arts and Sciences at San Pablo Colleges, namely BA Communication (BACOMM), BA Political Science (ABPOLSCI), and BS Psychology (BSP). These programs were selected because they differ substantially along dimensions that the existing literature identifies as theoretically significant, including their relationship to a regulated profession, the typical structure and duration of the placement, the nature of the tasks interns undertake, and the institutional weight given to the evaluation itself, while sharing a common institutional context that allows for meaningful comparison. By holding the university environment constant and varying the disciplinary setting, the study creates conditions under which differences in evaluation practice can more plausibly be attributed to disciplinary rather than institutional factors.

The qualitative data examined in this study comprise the site supervisor narratives produced at the conclusion of each internship across a defined period. These narratives are the free-text responses that external workplace supervisors write on the formal evaluation form returned to the university at the close of a placement. They are, by design, brief and bounded — shaped by the prompts, rubrics, and guidance that each program provides — yet they are also the principal moment at which a practicing professional commits to writing an account of an emerging colleague's performance. Rather than treating these narratives as transparent windows onto student performance, the study approaches them as cultural artefacts of disciplinary practice — texts authored from within a professional community that reveal what experienced practitioners in each field consider worth noticing, worth writing down, and worth counting as evidence of professional becoming. This orientation draws on established traditions in qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and on case study methodology as developed by Stake (1995) and Yin (2018), adapted for the specific demands of comparative work across bounded cases.

The decision to concentrate on site supervisor narratives, rather than to assemble a multi-source dataset that might also include student reflections or academic supervisor reports, is deliberate. Site supervisors occupy a distinctive and under-examined position in the evaluation ecology. They are neither the learners whose development is at issue nor the academics charged with awarding credit; they are practitioners embedded in the daily life of a profession, writing about a student whose work they have observed firsthand. Their narratives carry, in compressed form, the evaluative sensibilities of the field. Sustained attention to these texts, read comparatively across three programs, offers analytic purchase that a broader but thinner dataset would not.

Three research questions guide the inquiry:

1. What themes, competencies, and qualities of practice do site supervisors foreground in the narratives they produce within each of the three programs, and how do these compare across programs?
2. How do site supervisors across the three programs construct accounts of intern performance, through what evaluative vocabularies, rhetorical moves, and patterns of praise, qualification, and concern, and what do these discursive features reveal about each program's disciplinary expectations?
3. What do the similarities and differences across the three programs suggest about the relationship between disciplinary context and the practice of workplace-based evaluation in higher education?

The first question is descriptive and interpretive, establishing the substantive content of supervisor narratives within each case and enabling systematic cross-case comparison. The second shifts from content to form, treating the narratives as situated texts whose language, structure, and tone carry evaluative meaning beyond the explicit judgments they record. The third is synthetic and theoretical, drawing the empirical findings into conversation with existing scholarship on signature pedagogies, work-integrated learning, and the sociology of professional assessment.

Several contributions are anticipated. Empirically, the study offers one of the first sustained comparative analyses of site supervisor narratives across disciplinary boundaries within a common institutional setting, providing a richly textured account of how practitioners in three distinct professional fields render an intern's work into writing. Methodologically, it demonstrates the analytic value of treating these brief, routine, and often overlooked texts as primary qualitative data in their own right, rather than as administrative by-products or instruments for measuring something else. This reframing opens a set of questions, about evaluative language, professional judgment, and disciplinary identity, that have been difficult to pursue within evaluation-as-measurement paradigms. Theoretically, the study contributes to a more differentiated account of work-integrated learning, one that resists the tendency to speak of "the internship" as a unitary object and instead attends to the situated, disciplinarily inflected ways in which workplace evaluators make sense of emerging practitioners. Practically, the findings are intended to inform the work of program coordinators, curriculum designers, and institutional leaders engaged in the ongoing revision of evaluation forms, prompt design, and supervisor engagement initiatives, offering evidence-based guidance for decisions that are too often made on the basis of administrative convenience or uncritical borrowing from other fields.

It is important, at the outset, to acknowledge the boundaries of the claims this study can support. The deliberate focus on site supervisor narratives means that other voices in the internship evaluation process, the student's own reflections, the academic supervisor's assessments, the tacit conversations between site and university, are outside the scope of the analysis. This is a consequential choice, and one that readers should hold in mind when interpreting the findings: the study offers an account of how site supervisors write, not a comprehensive account of how internships are evaluated in their totality. Further, a comparative case study of three programs within a single institution cannot speak directly to the generalizability of its findings to other universities, national systems, or disciplinary configurations. The study is designed, instead, to generate analytic rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 2018), offering concepts and contrasts that can be tested, refined, and extended through further research in other settings and with other data sources. Its value lies in the depth and specificity of its reading across the three cases, and in the conceptual leverage that careful comparison can provide.

In bringing these three cases into comparative focus, the study takes seriously a proposition that the internship literature has often gestured toward but rarely pursued in sustained form: that the brief narratives workplace supervisors produce at the close of a placement are not merely administrative residue but are themselves sites where disciplines articulate, reproduce, and sometimes contest their visions of what it means to practice well. How those visions differ, and how they are alike, across three programs at the same university is the question this article sets out to answer.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The study is designed as a qualitative, comparative case study guided by an interpretivist epistemology. Case study methodology is well suited to inquiries that seek to understand a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, particularly where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not sharply delineated (Yin, 2018). The present inquiry treats each of the three degree programs as a bounded case and the assemblage of site supervisor narratives generated within each program as the primary empirical material through which the case is

constituted. A multiple- or collective-case design (Stake, 2006) was chosen in preference to a single-case study because the research questions are explicitly comparative: the analytic yield depends on reading cases alongside one another rather than in isolation. Consistent with an interpretivist orientation, the study assumes that evaluative writing is a socially and disciplinarily situated practice, and that understanding it requires careful attention to language, context, and meaning rather than the application of predetermined measurement categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

2.2. Case Selection

The three cases, from BA Communication, BA Political Science, and BS Psychology, were selected through purposive, information-oriented sampling (Flyvbjerg, 2006). All three are housed within the College of Arts and Sciences of San Pablo Colleges, which holds the institutional environment relatively constant, and each includes an internship or placement component that culminates in a formal evaluation submitted by an external site supervisor. At the same time, the programs differ along dimensions the literature identifies as theoretically consequential: their relationship to a regulated profession, the typical duration and structure of the placement, the nature of the tasks interns perform, and the degree of standardisation in the evaluation form itself. This combination of contextual similarity and disciplinary variation supports what Yin (2018) describes as a theoretical replication logic, in which cases are chosen to predict contrasting results for anticipatable reasons.

2.3. Data Sources and Corpus

The source documents were the standard internship evaluation forms returned to the university at the close of each placement across five academic years. These forms were held by the three programs as twelve consolidated records (program-by-academic-year compilation files), from which the individual free-text supervisor entries were extracted. To avoid ambiguity, it is important to distinguish three levels here: the source documents (the consolidated evaluation-form records), the data extracted from them (the free-text supervisor narratives), and the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the individual site supervisor narrative entry, defined as a single free-text evaluative comment written by one supervisor about one intern at the close of a placement. Each form yields one such narrative per intern. After extraction and screening, the working corpus comprised 230 narrative entries: 100 from BS Psychology (BSP), 70 from BA Political Science (ABPOLSCI), and 60 from BA Communication (BACOMM). Narrative entries were included only where the evaluation form had been fully completed and the free-text sections contained substantive commentary rather than minimal or non-response entries; entries consisting only of a numerical rating or a single word were excluded. Where the same supervisor comment was duplicated across cells of a source file, it was counted as one narrative entry rather than several. The evaluation forms themselves, together with any accompanying guidance provided to supervisors, were retained as contextual documents to support interpretation but were not treated as primary data. All narrative entries were de-identified before analysis: names of students, supervisors, host organizations, and specific sites were replaced with consistent codes to protect confidentiality while preserving relational information relevant to the analysis.

2.4. Analytic Strategy

The narratives were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021), conducted in two sequential phases. In the first, within-case phase, each program's corpus was analyzed independently. The researcher read and re-read the narratives, produced initial codes close to the language of the data, and developed candidate themes that captured the patterns of meaning particular to that case. This phase preserved the internal coherence of each program's evaluative culture before cross-case comparison began. In the second, cross-case phase, the three sets of within-case themes were placed in analytic conversation. Following the logic of cross-case synthesis described by Yin (2018) and the comparative strategies outlined by Miles et al. (2020), the analysis attended to three kinds of pattern: themes that recurred across all three programs, themes that emerged in two cases but not the third, and themes distinctive to a single case. Alongside thematic content, analytic attention was also directed to discursive features of the narratives, evaluative vocabularies, rhetorical structures, and patterns of qualification and praise, consistent with the study's treatment of the narratives as situated texts rather than transparent reports (Bowen,

2009). Coding was supported by manual procedures, and an audit trail of coding decisions was maintained throughout. The analysis followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis specified by Braun and Clarke (2021). In Phase 1 (familiarization), the analyst read the full corpus of each program twice before coding, recording initial impressions in analytic memos. In Phase 2 (coding), the analyst worked line by line through each narrative entry and generated codes inductively, staying close to the supervisors' own wording (for example, "punctual," "maintained confidentiality," "recommend she pursue law," "translates our creative vision to art"); both semantic codes (explicit content) and latent codes (underlying evaluative assumptions) were produced. In Phase 3 (generating initial themes), clusters of related codes were collated into candidate themes for each program. In Phase 4 (reviewing themes), candidate themes were checked back against the coded extracts and the full data set to confirm they were internally coherent and distinct from one another; themes that did not hold were merged or discarded. In Phase 5 (defining and naming), each theme was given a working definition and a label (for example, the "ethical-dispositional register"). In Phase 6 (writing), illustrative extracts were selected to evidence each theme. Coding and theme development were carried out manually by the lead researcher. Consistent with the reflexive (rather than coding-reliability) tradition of thematic analysis, no second coder or inter-rater reliability statistic was used; Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that, in this tradition, themes are actively generated through the researcher's interpretive engagement rather than discovered, so consensus coding is not the appropriate quality criterion. Instead, interpretive trustworthiness was supported by peer debriefing with two program collaborators, who reviewed the coding frame and the candidate themes against sample extracts and queried interpretations that did not appear well grounded in the data. Researcher bias was addressed through reflexive memoing throughout coding, in which the analyst recorded and interrogated assumptions arising from prior familiarity with the programs, and through the maintenance of an audit trail linking each theme to its underlying codes and extracts.

2.5. Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

Trustworthiness was pursued through the criteria articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported by prolonged engagement with the corpus, thick descriptive accounts of each case, and peer debriefing with collaborators at key analytic junctures. Transferability is addressed through detailed contextual description of each case, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to other settings. Dependability and confirmability are supported by the audit trail, which documents analytic decisions and their revisions. The researchers' own positionality, as internship coordinator and faculty member within the institution studied, shaped the interpretive work at every stage and is acknowledged here as both a resource for understanding and a source of potential bias. Reflexive memoing was used throughout the analysis to surface and interrogate assumptions arising from this positioning (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

2.6. Research Ethics

As the study draws on documentary records, consistent with established guidance on the ethical use of documentary and archival data in educational research (British Educational Research Association, 2018), all records were anonymised before analysis. Every direct identifier, including the names of students, supervisors, host organizations, and specific placement sites, was removed and replaced with a consistent non-traceable code prior to coding, so that no individual or organization can be identified from the quoted material. The verbatim narrative extracts reproduced in the findings are reported at this de-identified level, and any incidental detail that could enable identification was generalised. Access to the original, non-anonymised records was restricted to the researchers, and the linking key was stored separately from the analytic corpus.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Corpus Overview

The individual supervisor narrative entry is the unit of analysis throughout. The twelve consolidated evaluation-form records held by the three programs yielded a final working corpus of 230 substantive narrative entries, spanning five academic years (AY 2020–2021 through AY 2024–2025) and three degree programs at a single Philippine higher education institution: the Bachelor of Science in Psychology (BSP; $n = 100$ narrative entries), the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (ABPOLSCI, formerly ABPOL; $n = 70$), and the Bachelor of Arts in Communication (BACOMM; $n = 60$). Where a supervisor comment was duplicated across cells of a source file (the same comment repeated two or three times within a single table cell), it was counted as one narrative entry rather than several. Table 1 summarizes the corpus composition. Figure 1 displays the distribution of narrative entries across placement settings for each program.

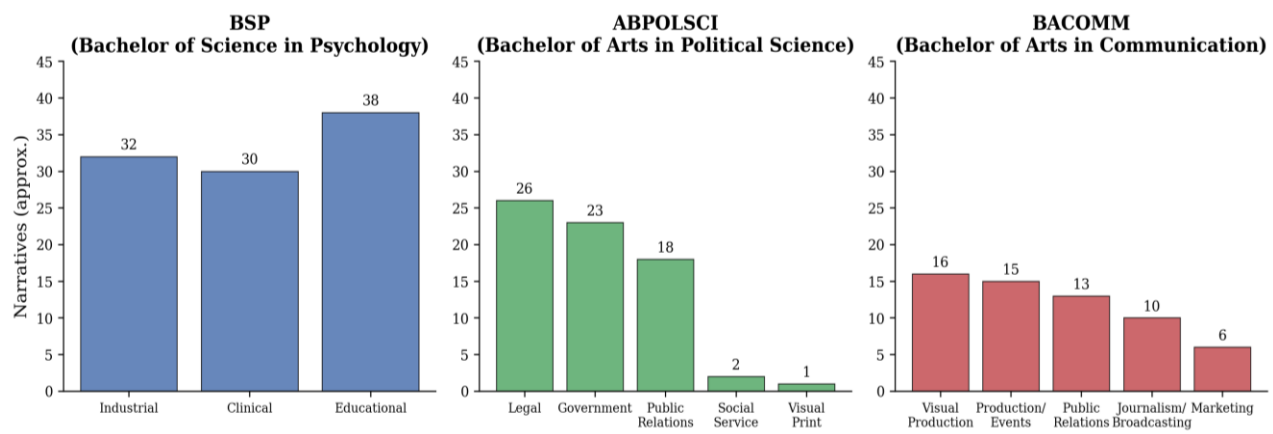


Figure 1. Distribution of site supervisor narratives across placement settings, by program

Table 1: Corpus composition by program, academic year, and placement settings represented.

Program	Academic Years Covered	Placement Settings	Narrative Entries (n)
BSP (Psychology)	2020–21 through 2024–25 (5 AYs)	Industrial, Clinical, Educational	100
ABPOLSCI (Political Science)	2022–23 through 2024–25 (3 AYs)	Legal, Government, Public Relations, Social Service, Visual Print Media	70
BACOMM (Communication)	2021–22 through 2024–25 (4 AYs)	Visual Production, Production/Events, Public Relations, Journalism/Broadcasting, Marketing	60

The distributional patterns visible in Figure 1 are themselves the first analytic finding. BSP placements followed a fixed tripartite rotation through industrial, clinical, and educational settings, a structured, pre-specified distribution consistent with the sub-specialty framework established by the Philippine Psychology Act (Republic Act No. 10029, 2010). ABPOLSCI placements clustered in the institutional settings of legal and public administration practice, with occasional deployments in social service and media. BACOMM placements were the most heterogeneous, scattered across five output-focused settings with no single site predominating. Where BSP produced a curricularly-specified rotation and ABPOLSCI an institutionally-anchored cluster, BACOMM produced an industry-following distribution — a structural difference that, as the within-case analyses below make clear, is mirrored in the evaluative language supervisors bring to each program.

3.2. Within-Case Findings

3.2.1. BSP: The Ethical–Dispositional Register

Site supervisor narratives within the BSP corpus foregrounded an evaluative register best described as *ethical-dispositional*: a consistent emphasis on the intern's character, moral conduct, and observable disposition toward work, clients, and colleagues, rather than on discrete technical outputs. Across all three sub-settings, supervisors recurrently praised interns for being "cooperative," "attentive," "punctual," "dependable," "respectful," and "willing to learn," and recurrently qualified their praise with observations that "communication skills need to be employed and developed," that the intern "could improve on her time management skills," or that she "should try to be more open to friends to avoid being misunderstood."

Task descriptions in the BSP narratives were heavily observational and assistive. Interns "assisted," "observed," "handled," and "facilitated" rather than "led," "produced," or "designed." In the clinical setting, typical task entries read: "Test administration and scoring of mental ability and personality tests. Participation in group activities." In the educational setting: "Signing of clearance, administering, scoring and interpretation of tests and other clerical work." The intern's position in the workflow was that of a supervised practitioner in formation, junior to the clinical or educational professional whose work the intern was there to learn by watching and assisting.

Two features distinguished the BSP narratives from the two other programs. The first was the explicit invocation of ethical-relational language in clinical contexts. Supervisors in 2024–2025 wrote of interns who "consistently demonstrated a strong understanding of ethical guidelines and maintained the confidentiality of client information," who "established genuine, nonjudgmental helping relationships," and who "showed empathy and understanding towards the needs of the clients" and created "a safe and trusting environment for clients to share their stories and experiences." This vocabulary is specific to the helping-professions tradition and was largely absent from the other two corpora.

The second distinguishing feature was a frequency of explicit character and comportment attributions tied to the classroom-adjacent norms of studenthood itself. Supervisors made repeated reference to attire, attendance, and demeanor, such as "She is punctual and does not take any absences. She wears proper attire during internship," "He shows an excellent attitude towards work, always punctual and has always been present during his internship," suggesting that supervisors read the BSP intern simultaneously as an emerging professional and as a student whose conduct reflects on the institution. Recommendations often continued this pedagogical register: "Prioritize OJT schedule, show some sort of courtesy," "Always follow school's rules and regulations," "Try not to be shy or timid." These attributional frames position the BSP intern within a pedagogy of supervised becoming in which receptivity, ethical comportment, and disposition toward continued growth are the chief objects of evaluative attention.

3.2.2. ABPOLSCI: The Institutional–Trajectorial Register

ABPOLSCI narratives operated in a markedly different register, one centered on institutional reliability and professional trajectory. Supervisors described interns performing concrete tasks of legal and bureaucratic practice, such as "notarization of documents, answering client calls, and encoding notarized documents and sorting documents for submission to Court," "assisting prosecutors in preparing pleadings/resolutions," "legislative research," "drafting affidavits," "attending hearings/preliminary investigations and inquest," and "transcribing minutes of the Regular Session," and evaluated their performance principally in terms of consistency, accuracy, and institutional fit. The evaluative vocabulary was densely populated with terms such as "reliable," "detail-oriented," "dependable," "organized," "meets deadlines," "respectful to clients and colleagues," "able to work both independently and collaboratively," and "professional." Where the BSP register invited the reader into an observational pedagogy, the ABPOLSCI register invited them into the routines of a functioning office.

The most distinctive feature of the ABPOLSCI corpus, and the one that most clearly separates it from the other two, was the recurrence of forward-looking, trajectorial recommendations. Supervisors frequently and explicitly directed

interns toward specific professional futures. Legal supervisors wrote, "I recommend that she pursue law or other further studies because she has the ability to succeed," and, in 2023–2024, "He should pursue legal profession, as he can make a positive impact in the legal world by advocating justice and defending the oppressed people." Government and public relations supervisors in 2024–2025 wrote, "Recommended to take the CSE and apply for public service duty," and, "Stay updated on political developments and engage in research and further education." Even shorter entries pointed explicitly toward credentialed futures: "Take further studies like law."

The evaluative narrative thus served not only as a retrospective report but as a prospective endorsement for a professional trajectory structured by formal credentials, the bar examination, the Civil Service Examination, graduate legal studies, electoral politics. This pattern, rare in BSP and largely absent in BACOMM, reflects the close coupling of political science as an undergraduate degree to the credentialed institutional gateways of the Philippine legal and public service professions. Qualifications, when they appeared, took the form of skill-developmental suggestions rather than character ones: "Gain more knowledge about legal matters and build more confidence," "Study more on computer works," "Improve communication and deepen knowledge of public finance and time management." The governing image of the intern in ABPOLSCI narratives was of a pre-professional positioned at the threshold of a credentialed career, for whom the internship functioned as an anticipatory socialization into institutional practice.

3.2.3. BACOMM: The Creative–Portfolio Register

BACOMM narratives adopted a third register, one organized around creative talent and the quality of produced outputs. Task descriptions dwelt not on routines but on artefacts: "Graphic design, video editing, copywriting, database management, and other tasks related to social media and festival programming," "Music video production design head, design head, video editor and graphic artist," "Behind the scenes photo and video. Interview for contents," "News article writer, live news broadcasting (radio), photo event coverage."

Evaluative language was laden with aesthetic and affective superlatives that were rare in the other two corpora. Supervisors wrote of interns who delivered "exceptional work consistently," who were "a ball of sunshine," who "translates ours and his creative vision to art seamlessly," who had "amazing talents and skills in graphic design," and of whom the supervisor had "nothing but great things to say." They wrote as fellow practitioners appraising craft: they commented on specific projects ("his work during our Anilag shoot was particularly noteworthy"), on software proficiency ("Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Premiere"), and on an emerging portfolio identity ("she is on her way to becoming a great designer with true and consistent talent").

Two further features distinguished this corpus. First, recommendations frequently took the form of personal industry endorsements rather than institutional reports: "I highly recommend him for this field because he has the skills and talent in PR," "I couldn't ask for a better intern than him," "any company or organization would be lucky to have him on their team," "I highly recommended her without reservation." In tone and structure these recommendations resemble creative reference letters written within a community of practitioners.

Second, where BSP qualified praise with character-developmental concerns ("communication needs to be developed") and ABPOLSCI with skill-developmental concerns ("gain more knowledge about legal matters"), BACOMM qualified praise with exhortations to resilience, courage, and aesthetic self-belief, terms peculiar to a reading of creative work as personal expression. A 2023–2024 supervisor wrote: "The world of media and communications is very much broad, in depth, stressful and ever evolving. So he needs courage to face changes and be adaptive to whatever the situation is. If he ever let fear and anxiety reign on his mind, you will lose focus and determination for the goals you want to achieve." A 2024–2025 supervisor urged: "Choose a workplace that appreciates your value. Keep growing, stay curious and continue working with integrity." The evaluative narrative here participates in the construction of a creative professional identity as much as it reports on performance.

3.3. Cross-Case Synthesis

Comparing the three cases reveals patterns of convergence and divergence that speak directly to the study's first two research questions. Figure 2 summarizes the prevalence of eight evaluative themes across the three corpora; Figure 3 summarizes the rhetorical registers and evaluative moves the narratives employ; Table 2 distills the comparative pattern into tabular form.

The prevalence labels reported in Table 2 and the 0–10 prevalence scores plotted in Figure 2 are summary descriptors of how frequently each theme was present across the narrative entries within a program; they are interpretive frequency indicators, not measurement scores or statistical test results. They were derived directly from the coding. For each program, every narrative entry was checked for the presence or absence of each of the eight themes, and the proportion of entries in which a theme was present was calculated. These proportions were then mapped onto ordinal bands for ease of comparison: “Very Low” for a theme present in under roughly 10% of a program’s entries, “Low” for roughly 10–30%, “Moderate” for roughly 30–60%, and “High” for more than roughly 60%; intermediate cases are reported as “Moderate–High.” The 0–10 values in Figure 2 are the same underlying proportions rescaled to a 0–10 axis (that is, the percentage of entries containing the theme divided by 10) to make the cross-program pattern visually legible. Because the analysis is qualitative and the bands are interpretive, these figures should be read as indicating relative emphasis across programs rather than as precise measurements. Where a label combines frequency with interpretive framing, for example, communication recorded as “Moderate (framed as concern)” in BSP, the parenthetical describes the dominant way the theme was discussed in that corpus, a qualitative judgement grounded in the coded extracts rather than in counts alone.

Table 2: Thematic comparison of site supervisor narratives across the three programs.

Theme	BSP	ABPOLSCI	BACOMM
Work ethic / diligence	High	High	High
Willingness to learn	High	High	High
Team collaboration	Moderate–High	High	High
Communication skills	Moderate (framed as concern)	Moderate (framed as competence)	Moderate (framed as creative asset)
Punctuality / attendance	High	Moderate	Low
Ethical conduct / confidentiality	High	Low	Very Low
Professional trajectory (credentialed)	Low	High	Low
Creative talent / output quality	Very Low	Low	High
Observational/assistive role	Predominant	Moderate	Low
Junior-contributor role	Moderate	Predominant	Moderate
Emerging-creative role	Very Low	Low	Predominant

Three themes recurred strongly across all three programs: work ethic and diligence, willingness to learn, and team collaboration. These may be understood as generic employability themes, consistent with Jackson's (2015) observations about the cross-disciplinary vocabulary employers use to describe desirable emerging workers. Two further themes, punctuality/attendance and communication skills, appeared in all three corpora but were weighted differently: in BSP, communication appeared most often as a developmental concern to be worked on; in ABPOLSCI, it appeared as a taken-for-granted competence routinely attested to; in BACOMM, it appeared as a creative and collaborative asset, tied closely to teamwork in production settings. The shared vocabulary is audible in the entries themselves. Work ethic and diligence surfaced across all three corpora in closely echoing terms: a BSP supervisor wrote that the intern “shows an excellent attitude towards work, always punctual and has always been present during his internship”; an ABPOLSCI supervisor described an intern as “reliable, detail-oriented, and able to meet deadlines”; and a BACOMM supervisor noted that the intern “delivered exceptional work consistently.” Willingness

to learn was likewise attested everywhere, from the BSP intern praised as “cooperative” and “willing to learn” to the BACOMM supervisor’s encouragement to “keep growing, stay curious.” Team collaboration appeared as “respectful to clients and colleagues” and “able to work both independently and collaboratively” in ABPOLSCI and as praise for an intern who “translates ours and his creative vision to art seamlessly” in the collaborative production settings of BACOMM. Read together, these extracts show that the surface convergence the cross-case pattern identifies is not an artefact of summary but is present in the supervisors’ own words.

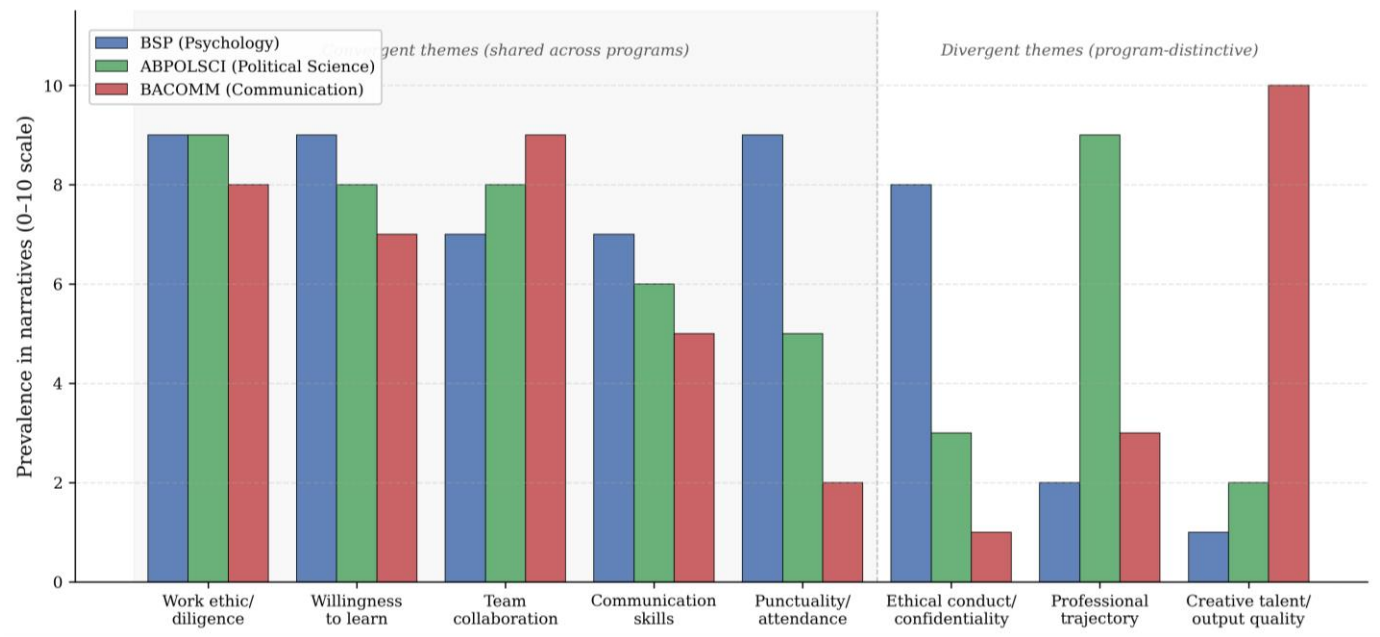


Figure 2. Prevalence of evaluative themes across three programs

Beyond these shared themes, the three programs diverged sharply in distinctive thematic content. Ethical conduct and confidentiality were foregrounded in BSP and largely absent from the other two corpora. Professional trajectory (especially toward law, further studies, and the civil service) was foregrounded in ABPOLSCI and largely absent elsewhere. Creative talent, craft, and portfolio-oriented identity were foregrounded in BACOMM and largely absent elsewhere. The rhetorical registers of the three corpora were equally distinct. As Figure 3 shows, BSP narratives favored observational praise coupled with character-developmental qualification and ethical-relational attestation; ABPOLSCI narratives favored institutional endorsement coupled with trajectorial recommendation; BACOMM narratives favored affective superlative, creative-industry vouching, and portfolio/craft appraisal.

The structural position of the intern within each supervisor’s account also varied systematically. BSP interns were written about primarily as observers and assistants, whose professional becoming was still under construction and remained open to correction. ABPOLSCI interns were written about as functioning junior contributors to institutional processes, whose competence was measurable in concrete bureaucratic and legal outputs (notarised documents, drafted pleadings, attended hearings, transcribed minutes). BACOMM interns were written about as emerging creatives whose talent was the primary object of evaluative attention, with the workplace serving as a stage for the display and elaboration of that talent. Figure 4 consolidates these patterns into a conceptual schematic of three *signature assessment registers*.

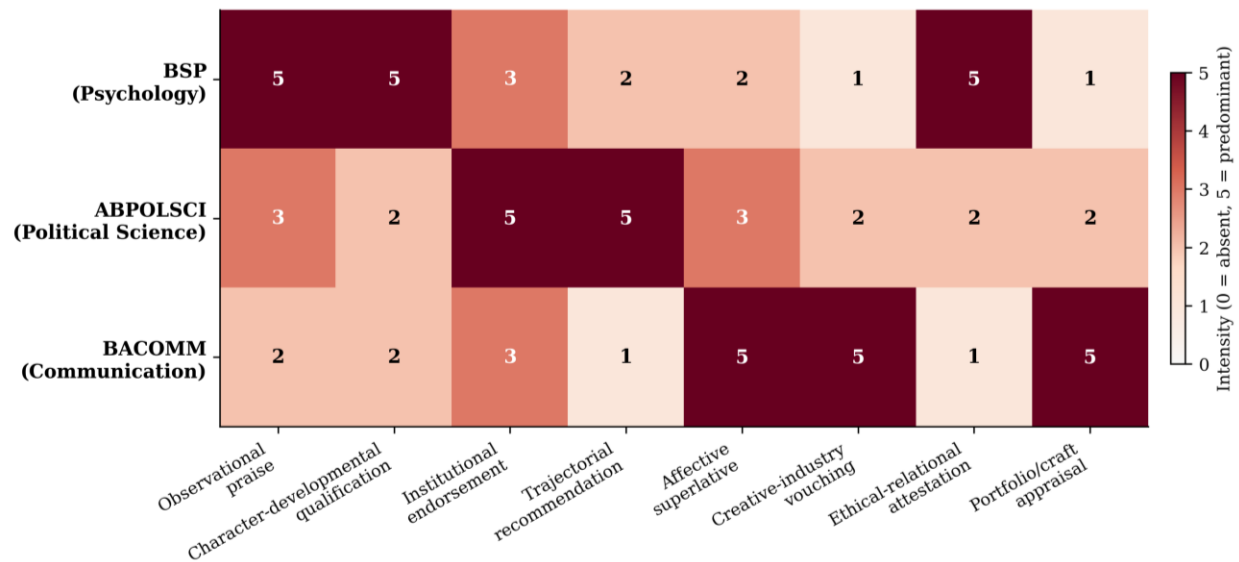


Figure 3. Rhetorical registers and evaluative moves across the three programs

4. Discussion

The comparative pattern that emerges from these three cases invites theoretical interpretation in terms of Shulman's (2005) concept of *signature pedagogies*. Shulman argued that professional fields develop characteristic ways of training newcomers that reflect their distinctive epistemologies, ethical traditions, and modes of relating to practice; these signature pedagogies are simultaneously instructional forms and ideological commitments about what it means to know and act within a profession. The present findings suggest that site supervisor narratives function as a signature *assessment* genre — a counterpart to signature pedagogy that renders these field-specific commitments visible in the moment evaluative writing takes place. Three distinct signatures are visible in the data.

In BSP, the signature assessment is ethical-dispositional. The intern is evaluated as a supervised helper in formation, whose chief qualities are ethical comportment, relational attunement, and receptivity to observation and correction. This aligns with the professional regulation of psychology in the Philippines, where the undergraduate degree is preparatory to graduate training, board examination, and licensure rather than a terminal professional credential (Republic Act No. 10029, 2010). The evaluative gaze is accordingly oriented toward dispositional readiness rather than executed professional output, and toward ethical comportment as the distinguishing mark of the helping professional in formation — a finding consistent with earlier scholarship on clinical evaluation in the helping professions (Helminen et al., 2016; Sullivan et al., 2007).

In ABPOLSCI, the signature assessment is institutional-trajectorial. The intern is evaluated as a junior contributor to bureaucratic and legal processes, whose performance is read as an indicator of fitness for the credentialed professional futures — law, civil service, legislative politics — that political science graduates in the Philippines characteristically enter. This pattern resonates with the sociology of professions literature on legal and civil service socialization (Abbott, 1988), in which the undergraduate placement is already inflected by anticipatory orientation toward the gatekeeping credentials of the profession (the bar examination, the Civil Service Examination). The supervisor's recommendation is, in effect, an early vote in a longer professional-socialization process.

In BACOMM, the signature assessment is creative-portfolio. The intern is evaluated as an emerging creative whose talent, craft, and aesthetic vision are the primary objects of attention, and whose professional future is mediated

through industry networks and portfolio reputation rather than formal credentials. Supervisors write less as institutional evaluators and more as peer practitioners extending recognition within a craft community. This pattern is consistent with studies of creative industry labor markets, in which reputation, portfolio, and network recognition carry evaluative weight equivalent to or greater than formal qualifications (Banks, 2007; McRobbie, 2016).

These three registers are not merely stylistic preferences. They encode the disciplines' different answers to the question of what professional *becoming* looks like. For psychology, becoming is ethical-dispositional formation under supervision. For political science, becoming is institutional socialization en route to a credentialed professional role. For communication, becoming is the development of a recognizable creative signature and a portfolio of work that speaks for the practitioner within an industry. The internship evaluation form, nominally a bureaucratic artefact common across the university, is in practice occupied differently by each field in ways that reproduce and perform the field's governing image of competent practice.

This finding carries practical implications. Institutional pressures toward standardization of evaluation forms, prominent in Philippine higher education in response to accreditation regimes and generic employability discourses (Commission on Higher Education, 2017), risk flattening the disciplinary specificity that these narratives reveal. A rubric well-suited to evaluating dispositional readiness in a psychology practicum may poorly capture creative output in a communication internship, and vice versa. More productive, the findings suggest, may be evaluation designs that preserve space for discipline-specific narrative registers while identifying the cross-cutting themes, work ethic, willingness to learn, team collaboration, communication, around which legitimate cross-program comparability can be sought.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how internship evaluation is practiced across three degree programs through a close comparative reading of site supervisor narratives. By treating these brief, routine, and often overlooked texts as primary qualitative data rather than as instruments for measuring something else, the study sought to make visible what evaluation forms ordinarily render invisible: the disciplinarily situated work supervisors perform when they write about an emerging practitioner.

Three interconnected findings emerge. First, at the level of surface vocabulary, the three programs are strikingly similar, reaching alike for the generic employability themes of work ethic, willingness to learn, team collaboration, and communication. Second, at the level of evaluative substance, they diverge sharply into the three distinct registers detailed above: the ethical-dispositional register of BSP, the institutional-trajectorial register of ABPOLSCI, and the creative-portfolio register of BACOMM. Third, these differences are not cosmetic; they encode three distinct answers to the question of what professional becoming looks like in each field.

Theoretically, the study extends Shulman's (2005) concept of signature pedagogies by proposing that professions also possess signature assessments: characteristic evaluative genres through which fields articulate, reproduce, and sometimes contest their governing images of competent practice. Practically, as the discussion argued, the findings caution against one-size-fits-all evaluation templates and favour designs that preserve discipline-specific narrative registers while using cross-cutting themes as the basis for legitimate cross-program comparability.

The study's limitations are not incidental. A single-voice, single-institution design cannot speak directly to the generalizability of its findings, and the exclusion of student and academic supervisor voices leaves the broader evaluation ecology beyond its reach. Three directions for future research follow. First, comparative studies across multiple institutions could test the robustness of the three signatures identified here. Second, multi-voice studies could place site supervisor narratives alongside student reflections and academic assessments to examine how the three evaluative perspectives interact within a single placement. Third, longitudinal designs could trace how evaluative registers shift in response to curriculum revision, accreditation change, or sectoral transformation in the professions the programs feed.

What the three programs studied here ultimately teach is a discipline of attention. The evaluation form looks like a bureaucratic artefact, and in one sense it is. But the narratives it contains are a site where disciplines write themselves, where fields quietly, repeatedly, and unselfconsciously declare what practicing well means within their particular tradition. Reading those narratives comparatively is one way of hearing those declarations clearly.

Declaration

Acknowledgements

None.

Competing Interests

None.

Ethical Approval

This research follows the ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects, including strict privacy and confidentiality measures outlined by the WMA Declaration of Helsinki (2013/2024 revisions). All participants are guaranteed anonymity; no personally identifiable information (PII) is collected or retained, and findings are reported in aggregate to ensure data cannot be linked to individuals.

Author's Contribution

Author1: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft

Author2: Supervision, Investigation, Resources

Data availability

Not applicable

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