

University students benefit from inaugural STEM Internship Scheme this summer

Launched by the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC), the newly established STEM Internship Scheme offers university students added incentives as they seek to gain hands-on innovation and technology (I&T)-related work experience while also greatly helping to bolster the city's future all-important I&T talent pool.

In the 2020-2021 Budget, Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po set aside \$40 million to subsidise short-term internships for undergraduates and postgraduates taking STEM programmes in local universities. Under the Innovation and Technology Fund, since early June the STEM Internship Scheme has already benefitted around 900 students from seven public universities. Around 1000 students are expected to benefit from the Scheme this summer.

Internship opportunities for students to develop interest and potentials in I&T

In recent years, the Hong Kong Government introduced a number of favourable policies, having set aside over \$100 billion to support a series of measures for the development of I&T.



The STEM Internship Scheme offers students added incentives to get an internship with I&T elements.

Partly thanks to these insightful measures, many of which the ITC has played a central role, the local I&T ecosystem has become more vibrant. More than ever, schools and parents are attaching

greater importance to STEM education, while local I&T companies have won multiple awards in various international competitions. It is hoped that the city's I&T investments will bear fruit in future.

Aside from education, which has undergone transformation in response to the community needs for better trained talents, talent nurturing outside the confines of the university campus is understandably important for Hong Kong — if Hong Kong is to progress to become a genuinely world-class, knowledge-based economy.

This exciting STEM Internship Scheme provides invaluable internship opportunities for students to develop their interest and potentials in I&T. Undergraduates and post-graduates who are local students in accordance with the classification by the Education Bureau, and enrolling in one of the full-time STEM programmes offered by the University Grants Committee-funded universities, are eligible to join the Scheme.

Diversified I&T jobs with monthly allowance from Government

Each university is given the flexibility to devise its own operational procedures as long as they are in line with the general guidelines issued by the ITC.

For the students, all they need to do is to register with their university's relevant office, most commonly the career and placement office, for an I&T-related internship position as long as their internship job contains I&T elements.

Some examples of eligible I&T-related work include (but not limited to): data analysis, digital marketing, engineering, information security, research, system development and technology-related intellectual property work. Each individual university has its own selection process to decide if an application is eligible or not.

The Scheme offers the student applicants an allowance of \$10,500 per month for a maximum period of three months. The employers may decide to top up the amount of the honorarium level as they consider appropriate, based on industry benchmarks or market rates.

This Scheme comes at these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, when employers across a range of industries face the unprecedented pressure of trying to keep their businesses afloat, let alone trying to expand them. The Scheme, therefore, can be seen to be playing a very positive role in the city's future economy, especially for all small-and-medium enterprises—estimated to account for 80 per cent of employment in the technology sector.

It is encouraging that, only weeks after its announcement, the Scheme has attracted nearly 900 applicants from seven eligible universities across Hong Kong. Along with the employers offering high-quality internship opportunities, the participating students are now eager and proud to be able to make an important contribution to enlarge the I&T talent pool for Hong Kong.

Thanks to the hard-work and ongoing support of the ITC, the participating universities as well as the employers, the STEM Internship Scheme is a major step in the right direction for Hong Kong's campaign to build a more developed knowledge-based economy, the vast benefits of which will surely spread to all aspects of the Hong Kong community.



Many Hong Kong universities' STEM-related disciplines are highly ranked in the academic world, representing remarkable potentials in the next-generation's I&T capability.



Details of the STEM Internship Scheme and contacts of the participating universities are available at itf.gov.hk