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# **Enhancing Student Competence Through Internships at SMEC Hospital** in Medan: Soft Skills and Ethics Development

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# Abstract

Internship programmes are an important part of strengthening student competencies, particularly in preparing them for the complex and dynamic world of work. This article discusses the implementation of student internships in the Computer Systems Study Programme at SMEC Eye Hospital in Medan as part of community service aimed at improving students' soft skills, professional ethics, and adaptability in a public service environment. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, involving four students over three months in the medical records unit, general administrative services, and BPJS services. The results showed significant improvements in work responsibility, interpersonal communication, and awareness of work ethics. Students successfully achieved the target of archiving at least 150 files per day and demonstrated effective communication skills in serving patients and collaborating with hospital staff. Field supervisors noted that the students were quick learners and adept at performing their tasks. The discussion in this article links these findings to relevant literature, reinforcing the importance of cross-sector collaboration between technology education institutions and healthcare services. This article recommends expanding the number of internship participants, using quantitative evaluative instruments, and strengthening the integration of students into the hospital's digital system in the future.

Keywords: Student Internship, Computer Systems, Soft Skills, Professional Ethics, Hospitals, Community Service, Medical Records

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology in the last decade has driven significant transformation in various sectors, including the health sector. The integration of information systems and data management in hospitals has become an urgent need to improve efficiency, accuracy, and quality of service to the community. In this context, there is a need for professionals who not only have technical skills in computer systems but also understand the dynamics of work and professional ethics in the public service environment. Therefore, higher education is required to not only provide theoretical knowledge but also provide practical experience that can shape the overall competence of students (Anjum, 2020; Bisschoff & Massyn, 2024).

One effective learning instrument in bridging the academic and professional worlds is an internship programme. This activity allows students to interact directly with real-world work situations and hone their technical, social, and ethical skills in addressing the complexities of professional tasks. SMEC Eye Hospital, as a private healthcare institution, has become a partner in implementing an internship programme for Computer Systems students of University Pembangunan Panca Budi. Students placed in the medical records unit, general administrative services, and BPJS patient services not only assist in administrative and technical work processes but also learn the importance of data accuracy, interpersonal communication, and teamwork under the pressure of a public service system.

This internship programme is part of a cross-sector collaboration strategy between educational institutions and healthcare facilities. As emphasised by Asaaga et al. (2021), this collaboration faces structural challenges such as organisational cultural differences and institutional priorities, but it still has the potential to generate innovation if



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facilitated through a clear joint framework (Calancie et al., 2021). Student involvement in technology-based service activities is also in line with the transdisciplinary approach proposed by Schwerdtle et al. (2020), where the integration of computer science and health practices is key to addressing modern public service challenges.

In the context of experiential learning, internships have proven effective in shaping students' professional awareness. Through direct involvement in the workplace, students learn not only to complete technical tasks but also to adapt to organisational dynamics, strengthen communication, and internalise work ethics (Lantu et al., 2021; Ngo, 2024). This aligns with the findings of Insani (2020), who emphasise that information technology education must integrate an understanding of digital ethics as a foundational element in building public trust in services delivered by IT professionals.

Previous research by Putri et al. (2023) and Perwitasari et al. (2023) shows that students who receive active guidance from their supervisors during their internship are better able to implement technical skills and work collaboratively on system development projects. The internship model within the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework also promotes the strengthening of soft skills, career exploration, and professional networking, which have an impact on students' readiness for work in both the public and private sectors.

Furthermore, these internship activities are also part of community-based education practices. Research by Forss et al. (2021) and Buregyeya et al. (2021) shows that collaboration between students and public service institutions has a significant social impact on improving the quality of public services.

At SMEC Eye Hospital, student involvement in medical record archiving, BPJS patient administration services, and direct interaction with hospital staff are concrete examples of how computer science contributes to the effectiveness of the healthcare system. Findings from information technology training activities outside the health sector also reinforce the relevance of this approach.

A study by Novelan & Sari (2024) on ICT training for rural communities shows that technology not only improves the efficiency of information access but also fosters ethical and social awareness in its use. On the other hand, Rizal et al. (2024) emphasise that the digitalisation of public administration systems, including in rural areas, promotes transparency and citizen participation, principles that also apply in the health sector. This internship can be seen as a form of student contribution to transforming public service systems towards digitalisation, transparency, and responsiveness.

In addition, Supiyandi et al. (2024) prove that a project-based training approach (real-world project) in the field of technology, such as web content development and responsive applications, can increase the confidence and practical skills of training participants. This has strong parallels with the internship experience of students at SMEC Eye Hospital, where direct involvement, mentor supervision, and real-world system-based practices strengthen students' readiness to face real-world work challenges.

Despite the abundance of research on information technology training and collaboration in various sectors, there are still very few studies that specifically evaluate the contribution of Computer System students in the context of community service-based internships in hospitals. This is the research gap of this study.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on strengthening student competencies through direct practice in the field of health administration, with an emphasis on the formation of soft skills and professional ethics as essential elements of work readiness. Thus, this study aims to describe and analyse the implementation of the Computer System student internship programme at SMEC Eye Hospital as a strategy for improving technical competencies, strengthening soft skills, and shaping the professional character of students.



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This study also aims to demonstrate that the integration of academic learning and field practice in the information technology-based public service sector is a best practice that can be replicated in the implementation of contextual and adaptive higher education. The research question in this study is: How does the Computer System student internship programme at SMEC Eye Hospital contribute to improving students' technical competencies, soft skills, and professional ethics?

#### 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, which aims to describe in depth the implementation of computer system student internships at SMEC Eye Hospital and its impact on improving student competence, particularly in terms of soft skills and professional ethics. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring contextual phenomena that occur in real life and allows researchers to understand the dynamics of interaction between students, the hospital work environment, and the existing organisational system. As emphasised by Buregyeya et al. (2021), a field experience-based approach in education requires a research framework that is capable of capturing the social nuances and professional values that are formed in direct practice.

Thus, this study emphasises an understanding of students' experiences in a naturalistic and reflective manner during the internship process. The subjects in this study were students of the Computer Systems study programme who participated in a structured internship at SMEC Eye Hospital for a period of three months. There were 4 final-year students who met the academic requirements to participate in the industrial internship programme.

Subject selection was conducted purposively, based on criteria of active involvement in hospital activities and availability to provide data through interviews and documentation of internship activities. In this context, interns were directly involved in various service units, such as the general patient administration and BPJS department, the patient data processing department, and assisting with administrative tasks of hospital staff. This involvement enabled researchers to obtain relevant empirical data on the contribution of internships to enhancing students' soft skills and understanding of professional ethics, as highlighted by Anjum (2020) and Mustofa et al. (2021).

The research instruments used were semi-structured interview guides and observation sheets of student activities during the internship programme. In-depth interviews were conducted with all interns to explore their perceptions, challenges, and reflections on their experiences while at the hospital. Additionally, the researcher utilised students' daily reports and field supervisors' evaluation notes to enrich the data. This approach aligns with the ideas of Velasco et al. (2023) and Samanes et al. (2023), who emphasise the importance of data triangulation in experience-based educational research to ensure the validity and richness of meaning in the collected data.

Data collection procedures were carried out through three main stages: direct observation during the internship, in-depth interviews with students after the programme ended, and analysis of supporting documents. Observations were made by recording students' daily activities, their involvement in hospital activities, and their interactions with staff and patients. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with open-ended questions to allow for in-depth narrative exploration. Documentation in the form of daily activity reports and field supervisor evaluation sheets was used to assess the consistency of students' involvement in the tasks assigned. This triangulation approach is also in line with the method used by Lan & Trung (2023), who argue that reflective data, observation, and performance evaluation should be combined to assess the effectiveness of internships on competency development.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, as suggested by Chadwick et al. (2024). The data from interviews and observations were analysed using open coding steps to identify the main themes that emerged, such as improved communication skills, discipline, team collaboration, and work ethic awareness. Data from documents and field notes were organised to reinforce these thematic findings. The analysis process was conducted iteratively until key themes emerged that described the internship's real contribution to strengthening students' soft



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skills and professional ethics. Interpretations were made carefully to avoid researcher bias, emphasising the rich contextual narratives of students' subjective experiences. This is important given that internship experiences are unique and influenced by complex social interactions, as demonstrated by Almeida & Morais (2021) in their multisensory approach to soft skill learning.

#### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

The community service activity in the form of an internship for Computer Systems Program students at SMEC Eye Hospital took place over a three-month period, from April to July 2025. The internship involved four final-year students who had met the academic requirements to participate in the industrial internship program. All students were placed in three main hospital service units: Medical Records Unit, General Administration Services, and BPJS Patient Administration Services.

This placement is carried out on a rotational basis during the internship period to provide a more comprehensive work experience to each participant. In general, students undergo daily activities divided into two main types of work, namely: (1) data and system-based technical activities, and (2) direct administrative services to patients. In the Medical Records Unit, students are assigned to carry out the digitisation and archiving of patient medical records.

These tasks include scanning medical records, classifying files based on patient categories, and entering basic data into the hospital system. Each student is given a daily target to archive at least 150 medical records. Based on daily reports from the students and evaluation sheets from the field supervisors, all students were able to meet or even exceed this target within the first few weeks of the programme.

In addition to activities at the Medical Records Unit, students were also involved in direct administrative services for both general patients and BPJS patients. In the general service unit, students assisted with patient registration, identity verification, form filling, and initial data entry into the hospital queue system. Meanwhile, in the BPJS patient service unit, students were tasked with assisting in the verification of participant cards, integration with the BPJS Health system, and documentation of patient services funded through the national health insurance scheme. These activities enabled students to interact directly with patients and their families and work alongside hospital administrative staff on a regular basis.

Based on activity logs and supervisor evaluations, it was found that students demonstrated significant improvement in several non-technical competencies, particularly in terms of responsibility toward work targets and interpersonal communication. All students were able to maintain consistency in achieving the minimum data filing targets, even during peak patient visit periods. The timeliness of task completion and neatness of filing were among the indicators that were highly rated by field supervisors. In this context, students demonstrated discipline, perseverance, and integrity in carrying out their assigned tasks.

Another aspect that was also significantly observed was communication skills in service. Students gradually showed improvement in greeting, answering questions, and directing patients politely and effectively. These observations are supported by the acknowledgement of administrative staff who stated that students are beginning to explain procedures clearly and respond promptly to dynamic service situations. Additionally, students' social communication skills with fellow hospital staff have improved, evident in harmonious teamwork, the ability to request assistance, and collectively managing task instructions. One student, EP, noted in his daily report that he felt more confident in answering patients' questions and began to understand the rhythm of hospital administration work, which requires accuracy and speed.



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The field supervisor at SMEC Eye Hospital, Mr F, who is a staff member of the Information Technology division, gave a positive assessment of the students' performance. During one of the weekly evaluation sessions, he stated: "The students quickly learned the tasks assigned to them and were fast and agile in performing their duties in both patient care and the medical records unit." This testimony indicates that the students not only mastered technical tasks but also demonstrated initiative in learning and adaptability to the hospital's workflow.

The students also demonstrated compliance with work ethics and institutional protocols. This was evident in their appropriate attire, use of official ID cards, readiness during morning briefings, and orderliness in following instructions. The supervising lecturer from the higher education institution, Ms. I, also reported that all students submitted their internship reports regularly and attended academic guidance sessions to reflect on their experiences in a professional manner.

In summary, the results of this student internship activity demonstrate the active and progressive involvement of students in supporting the hospital service system. The four students showed development in the aspects of work responsibility, discipline, service communication skills, social skills in hospital organisation, and adaptation to the work culture of public services. Quantitative data in the form of daily filing achievements (≥150 data per day per student) also supports the success of this activity in terms of productivity.

Table 1. Summary of Internship Activities and Findings

<b>Activity Aspect</b>	Findings Description
Internship Duration	April – July 2025 (3 months)
<b>Number of Students</b>	4 final-year Computer System students
<b>Placement Units</b>	Medical Records Unit, General Administrative Services, and BPJS Patient
	Administration
<b>Main Activity Types</b>	1) Data digitization and medical records archiving; 2) Administrative service to
	patients
Archiving Daily	≥150 medical records per student per day
Target	

#### 3.2. Discussion

The internship activities of Computer System students at SMEC Eye Hospital demonstrate a significant contribution to the development of students' professional competencies, particularly in terms of soft skills, work ethics, and understanding of technology-based public service systems. The results of this activity indicate that real-world work experience provides a learning environment that cannot be replaced by classroom instruction. This aligns with the findings of Anjum (2020) and Bisschoff & Massyn (2024), who emphasise that direct involvement in professional work activities is highly effective in shaping resilient work behaviour, communication skills, and students' adaptability to complex situations in the workplace. In this context, students' involvement in administrative services and hospital data systems has accelerated the learning process, making it more practical and holistic.

Internship experiences focused on medical record archiving, general patient care, and BPJS administrative services provide students with real-world challenges in managing tasks efficiently and responsibly. The daily target of archiving at least 150 medical records per student demonstrates that these activities are designed with a high level of professionalism. Students' success in meeting these targets indicates the development of work awareness regarding organisational performance standards. As explained by Supriyanto et al. (2022), the alignment between internship tasks and professional needs is crucial in preparing students for the workforce. Thus, this practice reflects the principles of experiential learning as outlined by Lantu et al. (2021), where students learn not only passively but through active engagement in a real professional environment.



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Students' communication skills in serving patients and interacting with hospital staff also improved significantly. This not only impacts the smoothness of daily work but also demonstrates the strengthening of interpersonal competencies that are highly sought after in the modern workplace. Studies by Chadwick et al. (2024) and Almeida & Morais (2021) emphasise the importance of communication skills in building healthy and productive work relationships, especially in interdisciplinary environments like hospitals. In this context, students learn to communicate politely, effectively, and efficiently—both with patients and with non-technical colleagues.

This improvement reflects the findings of Lan & Trung (2023), who found that the development of soft skills during internships was positively correlated with graduates' work readiness. It is important to note that computer science students face unique challenges when adapting to an environment dominated by healthcare professionals.

The organisational cultural gap between technology education institutions and hospitals is a challenge that needs to be managed effectively. Literature by Asaaga et al. (2021) and Kvilhaugsvik & Almås (2022) explains that cross-sector collaboration is often hindered by differences in hierarchy, organisational values, and communication styles. However, the success of students in adapting to the hospital environment demonstrates that appropriate training approaches, supported by active on-site guidance, can bridge these differences. This underscores the importance of internship designs that are responsive and adaptive to the contextual needs of the internship site.

Professional ethics emerged as an important dimension in this activity. Students consistently demonstrated compliance with hospital regulations, dress code, use of official ID, and responsibility for patient data confidentiality. This indicates that ethics education in the field of information technology needs to be implemented through direct practice so that students not only understand ethical theories but also internalise their values in real-world actions. Insani (2020) emphasise the importance of integrating ethical frameworks into IT education curricula to prepare students for moral challenges in the digital world. In this activity, students were given the opportunity to implement these principles in the context of public service, which is highly susceptible to data breaches and privacy violations if not strictly monitored.

The success of this activity also reflects the importance of collaboration between technology education institutions and healthcare facilities. Literature from Schwerdtle et al. (2020) and Calancie et al. (2021) encourages a transdisciplinary approach and the development of collaborative frameworks between the education and healthcare sectors to respond to complex challenges in public service. This activity serves as an example of how higher education institutions can adapt their curricula and internship programmes to meet the needs of the workplace, particularly in the health sector, which increasingly relies on information systems and digital technology. The opportunity for students to work in a hospital setting strengthens their ability to understand systems, adapt to strict regulations, and develop technology-based solutions to real administrative problems.

Although this internship provided many benefits, there were several limitations that need to be acknowledged academically. First, the limited number of participants (only four students) meant that the observational data did not represent the diversity of student behaviour more broadly. Second, there were no formal quantitative instruments used to measure competency improvement numerically, so the results were mostly descriptive and qualitative. Third, student interaction is still dominant in the administrative sector and has not been fully involved in more complex digital information systems. This should be noted for the development of future internship programmes so that computer system students are also given access to internal hospital digital systems such as Electronic Medical Records or Hospital Information Systems. These limitations are important to acknowledge, as emphasised by Mustofa et al. (2021), that reflection on program limitations is a strategic step in improving the quality of vocational education.

Overall, this internship activity provides strong evidence that hands-on experience in a hospital setting can significantly develop computer system students' competencies, both technically and socially. The integration of technical learning, soft skills, and professional ethics is an important asset for students to meet future workplace



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demands, particularly in technology-based public sectors. These findings also reinforce the arguments of Buregyeya et al. (2021) and Forss et al. (2021) that community-based and cross-sectoral learning are important strategies in addressing the challenges of 21st-century higher education. Therefore, strengthening the curriculum through collaboration between technology education institutions and hospitals needs to be further developed as part of an education strategy that is responsive to social dynamics and the needs of the public service sector.

#### 3.3. Documentation of Computer System Student Internship Activities at SMEC Eye Hospital

As part of the structured internship programme, visual documentation plays an important role in recording the dynamics of student activities during their internship at SMEC Eye Hospital. This documentation illustrates the active involvement of students in various work units, ranging from medical record archiving, general administrative services, to BPJS patient administration services. In these photos, students are seen working directly with hospital staff, using computer equipment, and performing front-office service tasks. The documentation also highlights students' interactions with medical staff and patients, which are integral to the development of soft skills and professional ethics in a real-world work environment. The students' participation in these complex and high-responsibility activities reflects the successful integration of academic learning and field practice, as mandated by the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) programme.



a)



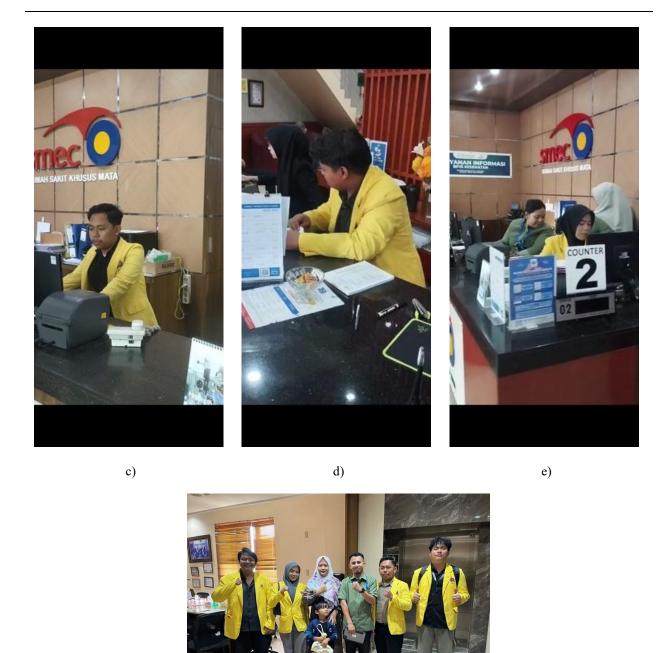
b)



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**Figure 1.** Activities in the medical records unit (a), (b) and in the general administration and BPJS unit (c), (d), (e) Together with the supervising lecturer and field supervisor (f) at SMEC Eye Hospital Medan

f)



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# 4. CONCLUSION

The internship programme for Computer Systems students at SMEC Eye Hospital has made a significant contribution to strengthening students' competencies, particularly in terms of soft skills, professional ethics, and responsibility towards work targets in a public service environment. Through direct involvement in medical record units, general administrative services, and BPJS patient care, students gain real-world experience that not only deepens their technical understanding but also sharpens their communication skills, teamwork, and awareness of professional standards.

The results of the activity show that students were able to meet the set performance targets, such as archiving at least 150 medical records per day, while also demonstrating improvements in non-technical aspects such as communication skills with patients, work ethics, and adaptability to the hospital's organisational culture. Field supervisors and academic advisors provided positive feedback on the students' performance, highlighting their learning speed, work efficiency, and timely task completion. Overall, this activity reaffirms that structured internship programmes are an effective means of equipping students with relevant and applicable skills for the real-world workplace.

Findings from this activity also reinforce the urgency of cross-sector collaboration between technology education institutions and healthcare facilities. Integrating technology education into the hospital service system opens up significant opportunities for developing human resources that are adaptable to the digitalisation of the public sector. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to continue strengthening experience-based curricula and establishing strategic partnerships with non-technology institutions to provide students with contextual and transdisciplinary learning opportunities.

Recommendations for future activities and research include: (1) expanding the number of internship participants to observe the programme's impact more broadly and representatively; (2) development of quantitative evaluation instruments to objectively measure competency development; and (3) further exploration of student integration into hospital digital systems such as electronic health records (EHR) and hospital information systems (HIS) so that computer science students can contribute directly to digital transformation in the health sector. With these steps, community service activities based on internships can continue to develop as a relevant, meaningful, and impactful educational platform for students, institutions, and partner organisations.

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