



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES



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THE BEST INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN PAKISTAN

EVENT REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2021

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September 2021

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Background

As a new generation of graduates enters the workforce, it is unfortunate that they are beginning to find it increasingly difficult to gain a measure of access and exposure to the professional world. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has [touted good internships](#) as an important vehicle for connecting young talent to the labor market, but finds that there are serious deficiencies in internship management around the world. In fact, one can view the problem as one of diminution in the internship model more broadly, and it is not specific to Pakistan but rather speaks to a larger international problem that finds echoes in every capitalist society. CASS sees the internship system around the world as having devolved into two types: **exploitation** and **anomie**.

Image 1: CASS Internship 2021 Cohort



The **exploitation** type of internship treats the intern as a cheap (or even free) form of labor to do the most [menial and tedious](#) of tasks day in, day out. For example, a pharma company might send an intern at his/her own expense to pharmacies in the roughest neighborhoods to count, vial by vial, an inventory of all their in-stock medications for 12 hours a day. This is a task that, when done for free, offers a tremendous convenience to such a company, but it offers nothing to the intern except the drudgery of using counting skills, the most rudimentary mathematical operation that a human can learn.

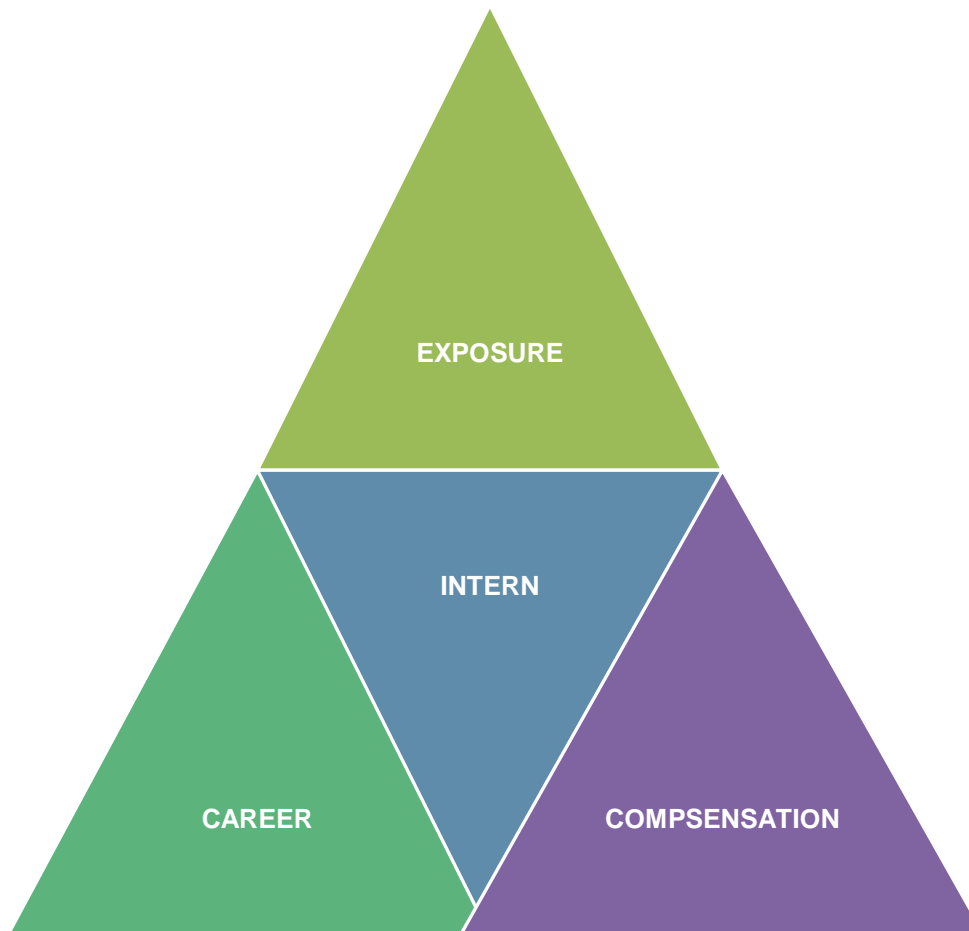
The **anomie type** speaks to the 'namelessness' that Marxian [sociologists identified](#) in the disassociation of the worker from his/her material work. Anomie transforms the intern into a drone that sits by the photocopy-machine, for example, and brings the boss' coffee/chai while waiting for the print-run of documents. This too offers little human capital development and does a disservice to the intern.

In other words, the modern internship system treats youth as either (1) free low-skill labor, or (2) ornaments in the office. As such, in devising its third annual internship, the question that we explicitly posed was whether CASS could offer a *third way*: Could CASS develop a program that offered a rich education, exposure, career window, and compensation to talented youth? At the same time, could CASS fulfill its own objectives of human resource selection, outreach, and community service in an effective manner?

The team at CASS began with the hypothesis that this could indeed be possible, so long as we would commit ourselves to the usual standards of excellence for which the Centre is now well-known within Pakistan, and increasingly abroad as well. If successful, CASS would demonstrate to the rest of the country, as well as observers overseas, that the internship model can be resuscitated in the service of a new generation of eager and aspiring youth.

It would also help interns attain their requirements of:

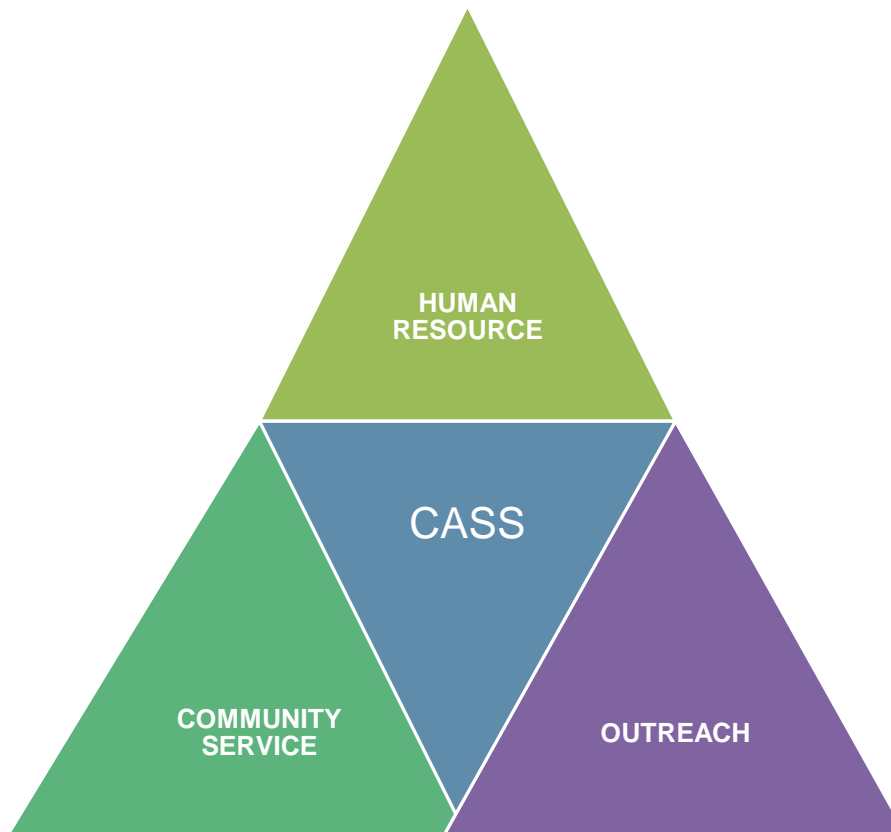
1. Exposure to professional life,
2. A window to begin a career (at least for the best ones), and
3. Compensation for research work undertaken at CASS.

Figure 1: Internship Objectives from the Interns' Standpoint

CASS' Internship Goals

It is important, then, to examine the goals of the internship as envisaged by CASS, which were 3+1: human resource replenishment, community service, and outreach (the main 3), along with the requirement that the program impose a minimal burden on the Centre institutionally (the +1), so that CASS' Directors and Researchers could maintain their regular productivity.

The **human resource requirement** arose from the fact that a cohort of researchers were moving on to new phases in life, whether in household formation or the pursuit of further education. Their vacancies would need to be filled, and it would be best to do so through a transparent, merit-based process, so that not only would their shoes be filled, but also that a new cohort should strive to surpass the predecessor researchers.

Figure 2: Internship Objectives for CASS

The logic of **outreach** was that, as always, the best advertising is word-of-mouth, and so the youth that would be immersed in CASS' hospitable, welcoming, professional, safe, and research-driven environment would share its merits with their friends on-campus and to their families along with a wider network of contacts. This would allow an awareness about CASS' excellence to grow among a youth cohort that anticipates its graduation in the coming few years.

Additionally, the **community service** element was of the utmost importance because, given that Pakistan has given so much to each member of CASS, it is time for its members to give back to the country.

The best contribution that CASS might make in the longer-run is that of informing and shaping the budding minds of the country's best youth. To offer them a supplementary education, one that would perhaps surpass that which they receive in the universities, would be a social contribution towards public value creation. In fact, it was the logic of community service and outreach which made the best case for a highly invested Internship Program to be developed for the interns.

Images 2-3: Intern Workspace - A Place to Work & Learn



CASS, thus, proceeded with a 4-week internship during the month of August 2021, which was conducted at the Centre premises where the interns were given a large, well-conditioned, well-lit, and spacious room to sit during their work hours. They also had access to the CASS library, and to the auditorium for several events. Interns would also liaison periodically with supervisory Directors in their offices to seek guidance on their assigned research. They were also taken to Nur Khan Air Force Base for a field trip which gave them a rich exposure to the normal activities of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

The field trip to Nur Khan Air Force Base was noted as a truly unique experience, and one which enriched the interns' knowledge about a major national institution that strives for continued excellence and stands as a pillar of national security.

The trip only helped to grow their appreciation for the PAF and further cemented the already positive image of the Air Force which they held.

Images 4-5: Field Trip to PAF Nur Khan Base



Selection

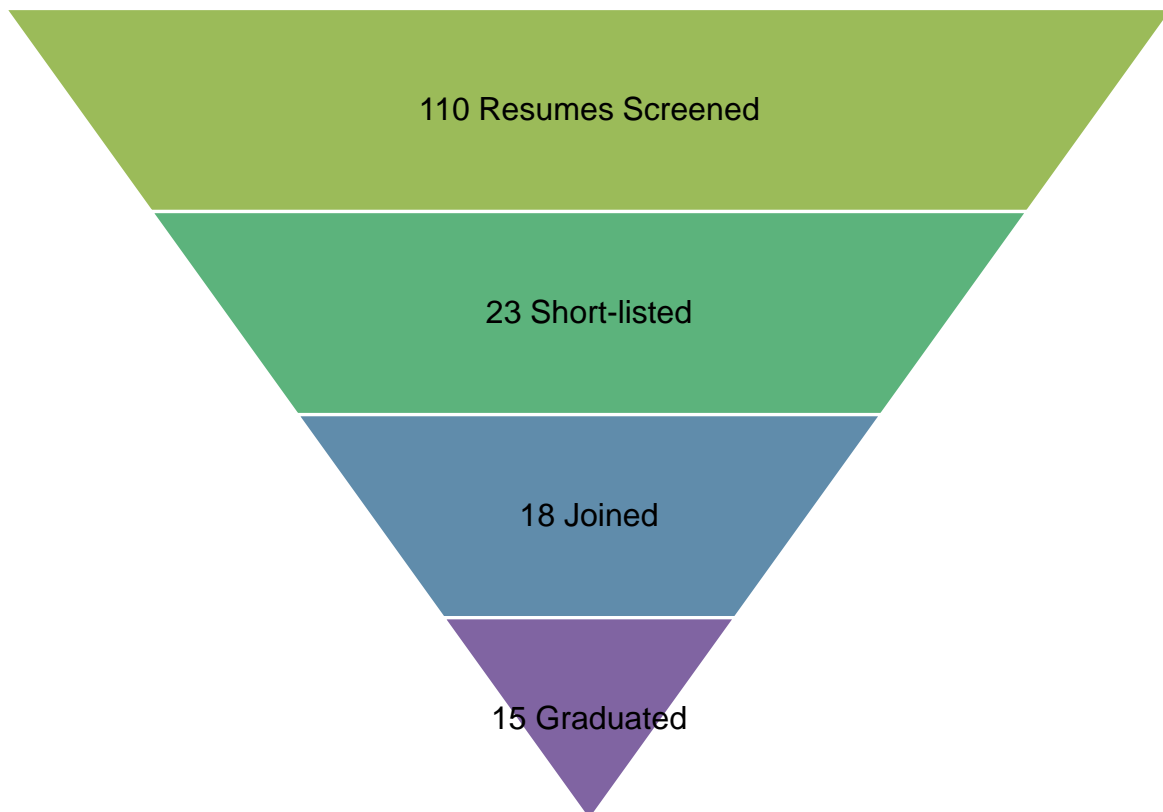
In terms of the selection of interns, a rigorous process was undertaken by two researchers under the guidance of the Internship Director/Coordinator along the following rubric of importance:

1. **Experience**, where think tank or academic experience was an advantage,
2. **Education**, both in terms of the quantity and quality of their scholarship, and
3. **Publications**, at various tiers (papers, opinion articles, etc.) which would demonstrate a writing aptitude that is necessary for success at any leading think tank.

There were two additional requirements for a 3+2 formulation: interns would need to be based in the twin cities, and would need to be vaccinated, given that CASS has strict protocols for vaccination and has made every effort to mitigate COVID-19-related risks.

This offered a transparent and neutral selection mechanism which would best fit CASS' requirements. 110 resumes were screened for their validity, out of which 23 were short-listed. 18 candidates joined the CASS 2021 Internship Program and 15 completed it, with the remainder dropping out due to personal obligations.

Figure 3: Intern Selection Figures

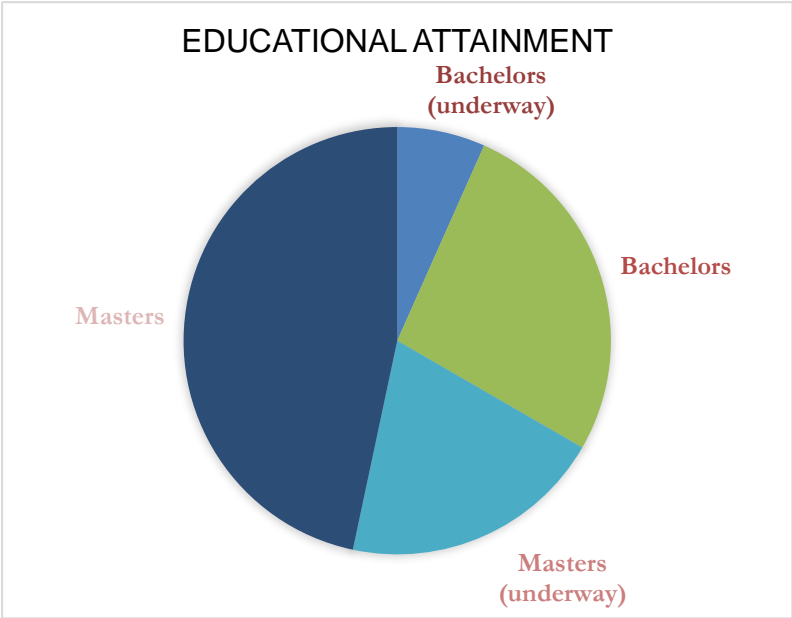
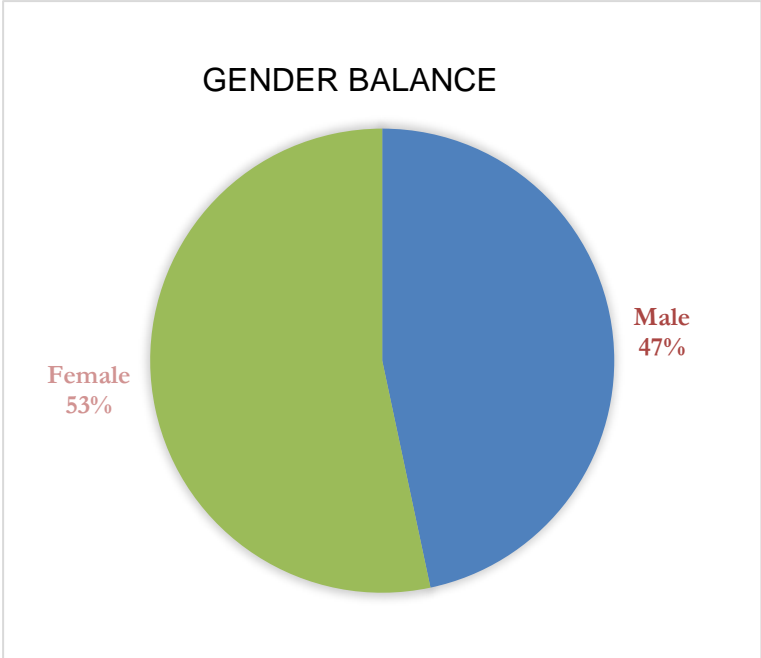


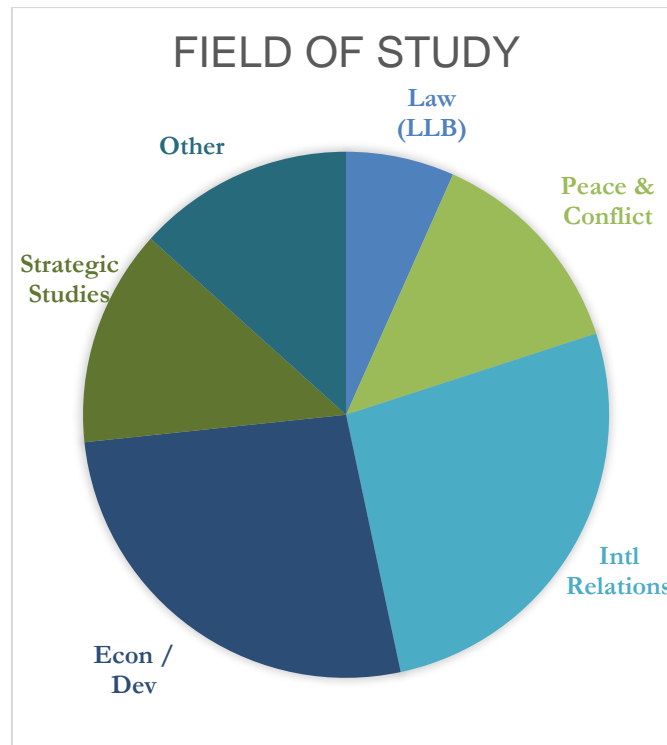
What emerged from the sample of interns was a pool that was rich in its educational diversity and educational attainment, and which was nearly equal in its gender-balance. As Figure 4 (Gender Balance) indicates, there was a near 50-50 ratio of boys and girls. As Figure 6 (Educational Attainment) shows, half of them had completed their Masters-level education, which made them more readily employable, while several were either completing their undergrad or Masters.

Interns still undertaking their studies would help with CASS' outreach goals rather than the human resource objectives. Furthermore, the quality of intern-outputs did not correlate strongly with their level of education, as Bachelor-level students found themselves at times equally or even more successful at the research tasks required. The field of studies of the interns were all in the Social Sciences (see Figure 5 Field of

Study), but could be disaggregated in various ways, for example, if pure International Relations were to be separated from Peace & Conflict Studies and Strategic Studies.

Figures 4-6: Gender Balance, Educational Attainment & Fields of Study





Evaluation

In order to make the interns' evaluation comprehensive, meaningful, and well-tailored to the position of researcher, CASS structured their evaluation rubric along five types of outputs: a webinar report, an opinion piece, a working paper, a presentation, and marks for their demeanor/personality (Figure 7).

The primary **output** of their internship would be a 4,000-5,000 word **working paper** on an assigned topic. The **topics** were prepared in consultation with CASS Directors in their relevant domains, so that the research might (if done well) help advance the research efforts under each Director. There were 36 topics in total, which is both a testament to the diversity of research at CASS, but also to the flexibility that the Internship Program offered to candidates in terms of pursuing areas of research interest. It was the topics of the working papers that would form the basis for a **presentation** made by each intern in the 4th week of the internship, thereby allowing them to articulate their findings to CASS at large and to their peer interns, as part of their wider education on a plethora of subject matter. Directors voluntarily sat in various presentations as their schedules permitted.

Figure 7: Outputs-based Evaluation

The **webinar reports** that the interns produced were based on a CASS [webinar event](#) on the subject of India’s illegal annexation of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5th, 2019. Interns condensed the proceedings of the webinar into 1500 word reports, and distilled the key takeaways while providing their analysis.

For the **opinion articles**, interns were assigned the broad area of the “Situation in Afghanistan” and then asked to pick a subtopic to develop into an 800-word piece. Opinion pieces are an important output for CASS researchers, and these were evaluated by CASS’ Senior Editor.

The **personality factor** is one which cannot be ignored in a professional setting, since no amount of output can compensate for a disagreeable interpersonal disposition; but given the positive demeanor and agreeable personalities of all interns, they all scored well in this area.

Lectures

Figure 8: Lectures by CASS Faculty

				
AC TANVEER PIRACHA	DR USMAN CHOHAN	SYED M. ALI	AMB. JALIL ABBAS JILANI	SITARA NOOR
1) INTRO TO CASS / CODE OF CONDUCT 2) INTRO TO PAF	1) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 2) VALUE DETERMINANTS OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT	PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY	STRATEGIC STABILITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH ASIA

One of the most valuable elements of the Internship Program was the knowledge that CASS instilled through a series of lectures, which were delivered by subject experts at CASS. The **lectures** (8 in total) were all of high quality, and the thoughts and perspectives shared exposed the interns to learning that they were unlikely to otherwise get at this stage in their lives. Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani's lecture on 'Pakistan's Foreign Policy'; Mr Syed Mohammad Ali's lecture on 'Pakistan's Strategic Environment'; Ms Sitara Noor's lecture on South Asian stability; Air Commodore Tanveer Piracha's lecture on the Pakistan Air force, and Internship Coordinator Dr Usman W Chohan's lecture on economic prosperity; all offered higher order thinking to inform fresh young minds. Meanwhile, AC Piracha's lecture on the CASS code of conduct (with Sq Ldr Saad), Senior Editor's lecture on opinion article writing, and Dr Chohan's lecture on research methodology, all helped to reinforce the technical aspects of research in an environment such as CASS.

The lecture aspect was a crucial aspect of the community service goal that was embedded in CASS' objectives for the internship, since the rich knowledge base of the think tank was being distilled into discrete and meaningful lectures for a young audience.

Image 6: Lecture by Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani (CASS Director)



Graduation

At the end of the internship, a graduation ceremony took place where the interns were handed a certificate of their participation in the Program. A few speeches were given, including one which reinforced the essence of this report, celebrating CASS's success in devising what one of best Internship Programs in the country.

It was a touching and well-received ceremony, despite COVID-19 restrictions, since the interns had made many new friends amongst each other, as well as among the CASS team. They learned a great deal, shared their research findings, and built a new network of friends.

In the responses to the Feedback Form for this Program, interns articulated their appreciation for the efforts that CASS had made to enrich their lives.

Images 7-8: Graduation Ceremony



Conclusion

During the internship, many participants expressed a degree of amazement at the standards of excellence to which CASS adheres, including the:

1. Quality of the premises and facilities,
2. Inclusive, respectful, and safe culture (particularly for girls),
3. Opportunity to go on an enriching field trip to Nur Khan,
4. Variety of internal speakers, and
5. Rigor and multidimensional analysis of intern output-evaluation.

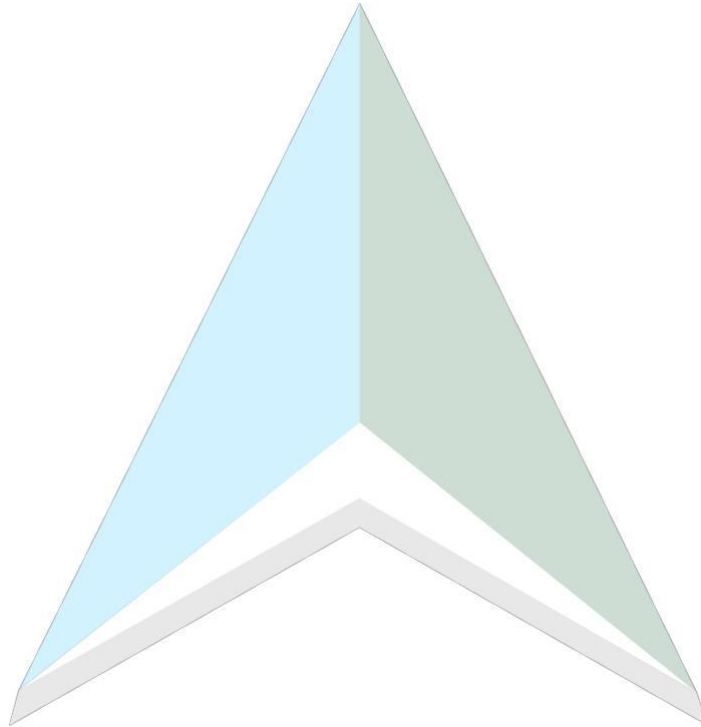
In each of these aspects, CASS demonstrated a commitment towards the interns, and this was a source of great inspiration for the cohort. However, there is always room to improve, and one remains attuned to the requirements of the interns and their post-internship feedback, to add even greater value to the program in the future.

CASS has never been characterized by complacency, and the Centre will continue to strive for excellence and further optimization of all processes, including the annual internships.

Some of the interns were still in the process of completing their studies, but they would go back with a sense of meaningful learning and engagement as they return to the classroom setting. For others, even if they do not join the Centre, they gained a great deal from their experience. A few well-performing candidates will join CASS, thus replenishing the pool of intellectual energy at the think tank. Wherever each intern is heading, they are going away enriched by the CASS Internship Program.

It is by no means a stretch to claim that CASS offers the Best Internship in the country. The Centre attained its objectives of community service, human resource replenishment, and outreach to the youth, while offering to interns a unique learning experience and exposure to professional life.

Regarding the hypothesis of reforming the global internship system, especially in South Asia, by offering a third way that does not fall prey either to models of exploitation or of anomie, CASS' program confirms the possibility of reinvigorating the internship system for youth engagement and connectivity, in both Pakistan and overseas.



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