

# Mix and match for a great career graph

**POLES APART** For students who study in one field and work in another, it's a happy experiment, a fresh change and a rare chance to enhance their skills

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Combination courses, though very popular abroad in the field of education, are hard to come by in India. Such courses let you study science and take up an arts subject alongside. Or maybe combine science and commerce similarly. According to Karan Gupta, education consultant at Karan Gupta Consulting, there is no specific list of colleges in India that offer combination courses, but all engineering colleges enable students to execute projects outside of the classroom, which are like internships.

"The Indian education system at the college level is theoretical. Some fields in engineering such as electrical, mechanical and computer engineering have related projects that students have to do as part of the course. Such projects are sometimes at par with those offered abroad", he says.

But this doesn't seem to stop students from experimenting outside. Those who have had enough of rote learning tend to take up jobs only in technical fields, and therefore ignore creative fields as career options. Others have found that spreading their nets wide only results in a better resume when they start looking for a job.

"Internships, related or unrelated, help students gain practical knowledge about the outside world. I don't think students are pressured to take up an internship only because it is related to what they are studying. Internships which are unrelated to their study programme allow the students to explore something new, while the related ones give them a chance to apply what they have learnt in class. In any case, all internships help students to get an idea of how to work within an organisation or office," says Shraddha Kamdar, visiting faculty at several Mumbai colleges.

Harnoor Kaur, 20, completed her BSc in organic chemistry

from KJ Somaiya College of Science and Commerce and loves writing. She has been interning as a writer at Festival Sherpa, an online music magazine, since December 2016. "I chose to write because it makes me happy. After a point, everything, whether creative or not becomes work and then you push yourself through it. But writing is something that doesn't kill me from within," says Kaur.

She plans to pursue the Masters in forensic science and criminology for her career, while holding on to writing in some way.

"I wanted her to continue studying science, get a government job and only pursue writing as a hobby but the more she tried, it only depressed her. Now she is happy and says she wants to continue studying", says Narinder Kaur, Kaur's mother.

## EXPLORING OPTIONS

Hardik Malhotra, 21, an electrical engineering student at Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, has jumped to and from several ventures, simply because the subjects appealed to him. He has interned in the finance domain, making algorithmic strategies to trade and then as a data analyst at Hashtag Loyalty, a digital loyalty platform. Further on, in 2016, he did two internships, the first as a research intern at Insight Data Analytics Centre, Ireland, in natural-language processing and translation where he was involved in translation of ontologies (a branch of metaphysics). The other was at Centrale Superlec University in France during his undergraduate thesis. There he designed an efficient parallel algorithm for clustering of huge data that can be used for multiple applications including biology and e-commerce.

"Everything these days is moving towards smart tech and artificial intelligence, and this is what excited me about these internships. Even in future I see myself more involved in software

end of the technology and making an impact in the world with the same", says Malhotra.

He found an interest in programming and took on these opportunities to make the best of them as compared to electrical engineering, which is essentially about hardware and does not seem to be his cup of tea.

"He has always displayed a strong will to pursue what he is passionate about, proving that where there is a will there is a way, says Sangeeta Malhotra, Malhotra's mother.

## CHERRY ON THE CAKE

Internships in fields that they are not pursuing academically have proved to be a way of supplementing their knowledge with practical experience. And the reason could be just anything, say experts. "Many students in India are 'forced' into academic disciplines by their families. However, they compromise on their passions and interests. Eager to explore their passions, but still unsure of their paths, they seek internships in varied domains," says Vibha Kagzi, founder of ReachIvy.com.

Charoo Agarwal, 21, a final year Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) student at Jai Hind College, is currently interning at CNBC, a news channel, since February 2016. Her previous internships include working for AVIAREPS, a mediating firm for foreign airlines and travel agencies in 2014 and at House of Blondie, a fashion house in 2015.

of the few management courses that give you an opportunity to work on your presentation skills and the schedule allows you to get hands-on experience of the corporate world. CNBC meant event management and media in a single internship, since I got a chance to work on events where eminent business personalities like Mr. Motilal Oswal were present", says Agarwal.

Her mother, previously unsure of her daughter's decisions, became supportive once it was clear to her that excelling at interpersonal skills is of utmost importance in the corporate world. "Earlier I wasn't sure if these internships would really help her because they were nowhere close to her major in finance. It was later that I realised that it's about learning to deal with people and being in real-life work-related situations," she says.

the area of work", says her mother, Vandana Agarwal.

Even education experts believe that it is necessary for students to go beyond the walls of classrooms and get exposed to the proceedings of the corporate world.

"Practical learning is very important for students to understand concepts. Some universities abroad offer sandwich and co-op programmes in which students study for one year and then work full time for another year and then get back to their studies. Such courses are very popular and in great demand for obvious reasons. The Indian education system must imbibe practical learning, internships and co-op opportunities for all courses", says Karan Gupta. But he also feels that an internship not related to what a student is studying, holds no value when it comes to looking

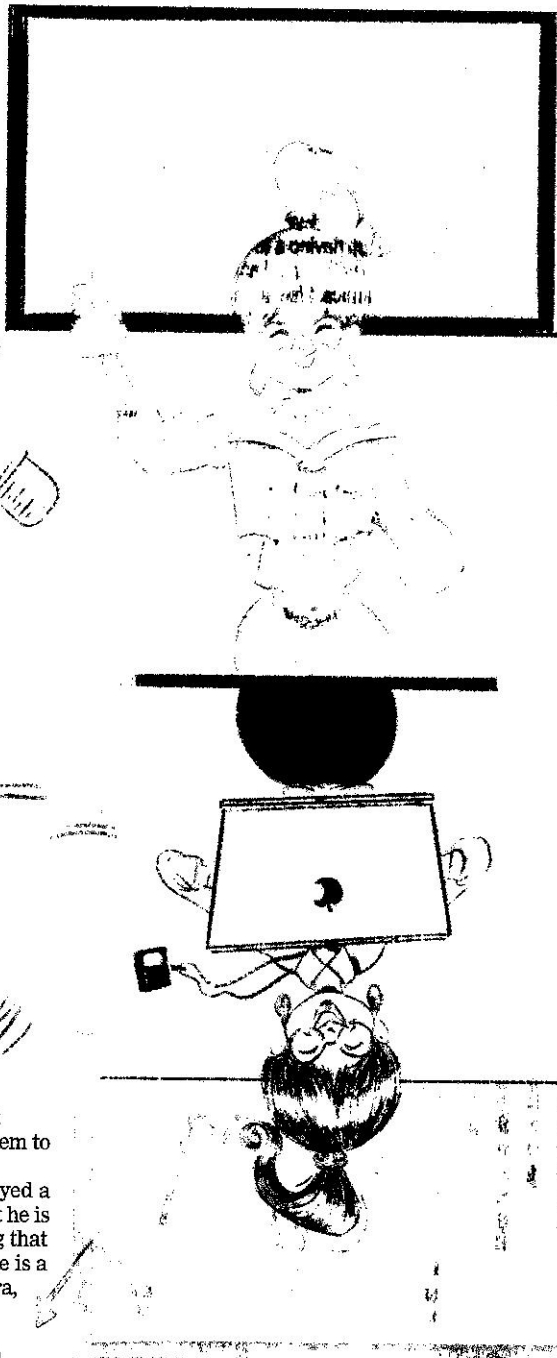


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