

Employ.ed on Campus 2020 Internship Case Study

Jai Shah

3rd year Chemical Engineering student

What was your internship?

Research and Resource Development intern - Careers Service

Description of your role and responsibilities

As a research and resource development intern, my main role was to deliver the project commissioned by the lead of graduate support. Initial focus was on desk based research identifying professional behaviours that graduates struggle with. The other main part of the research was interviewing and surveying employers, alumni and previous Employ.ed interns to identify what they struggled with. The findings were presented in a summary report to my line manager. Once the behaviours were identified, my main role was to develop the resources. This ended up in the form of web pages. We recorded 15-20 minute discussions with the employers and alumni I engaged earlier to produce content that helped provide quick techniques, advice and strategies to address the behavioural gaps. These discussions sit on the web pages that I produced. My role didn't really have any continuous responsibilities but was more of a project that had end deliverables that were submitted on time to my line manager and the leadership team at the CS.

What interested you in this specific role?

The idea of independently running and completing a project with tangible outcomes was something that really interested me. I felt I needed to take ownership of a project to practice meeting deadlines and deliver the outputs. The concept of professional behaviours was new to me and definitely the challenge of knowing very little when entering the role was a fun challenge! The current working world needs flexible and agile graduates willing to learn and this was a chance to practice doing this. Furthermore, having a solid understanding of professional behaviours will help me prepare for the workplace. Understanding what employers want will help accelerate my progression and my development in a role.

How have you benefited from this experience?

My style of email communication has improved. I now use bullet points, write less and am much more to the point which I think will help all parties get the information they

need more efficiently. This internship has prepared me for the remote working world. I have a good understanding of MS Outlook and teams which are essential in most virtual offices. The chance to work remotely for 12 weeks has helped me learn what are good strategies to employ and what are some habits to avoid. e.g Big carbohydrate lunches! Also meeting etiquette in teams is very different to in person and the way to communicate and ask questions is very different in a remote world. This internship provided practice of asking questions, attending meetings and completing work remotely. My soft skills have also improved. I got to practice presenting and communicating ideas to senior stakeholders. My desk based research skills improved and I got to practice writing content for different audiences. The internship allowed me to identify what I can work on. I feel after 2 stakeholder facing internships, I feel my communication and presenting skills are strong and I now need to work on technical skills. For example MS Excel, MATLAB programming or Python for Data Science. If I can develop these technical skills to complement my soft skills, I think I will be well prepared for the workplace environment. Finally, this specific internship has helped me gain a picture of the current labour market. With Covid-19 leading to many redundancies and restructuring of companies, this internship has provided me with labour market intelligence that will be invaluable when navigating the job market for roles within Engineering, Responsible asset management and climate consulting. I have developed my network and by keeping in contact with members from the Careers Service, I will hopefully be able to get advice on my career and what I can work on over my final year to get the most out of my time in Edinburgh.

What advice would you give to future interns?

1. Don't be afraid to ask questions - Everyone is willing to help and give you some of their time. Find out quickly what people's preferred communication method is. Is it by email, a quick message on teams or a face to face call? This can help you get the answers you need and the information they need quickly.
2. Actively manage up - Ask your line managers for feedback on what you are doing well and what you can work on. This is really important to ensure you are working to the best of your ability and that the work you produce is of the best quality. It is not a bad thing to take responsibility and face mistakes. Taking the learnings from it, is often where you learn the most.
3. Do the Edinburgh Award - It's a great way to get your work recognised by the University and get the chance to reflect on your skills. It definitely helps you identify your strengths and weaknesses, which will allow you to develop further.
4. Strengthen and expand your network - The people you meet in your teams will likely want to stay in touch and down the line more often than not they will be really valuable contacts to have in terms of advice and guidance. You never know how you may help each other out in a few years' time!

5. Get involved and work hard – Use the time well to learn from more experienced members of your team. Book in time with them to learn about their career paths and take advantage of their commercial understanding. They know the sector really well and it's a great chance to get up to date and develop your commercial awareness. Asking line managers, other colleagues and directors for quick catch ups can help you learn more about them and their journeys. Read and take in as much information as possible whether that be reports, slideshows or webinars. Make sure to enjoy the experience, it's a lot of fun joining a new team.