



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: The Saltire Scholars Undergraduate Internship Programme

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition to employment

Structured internships give undergraduate students experience of graduate-level recruitment processes and project based work experience to give them confidence and skills to enable them to successfully transition to graduate employment at the end of their studies.

Abstract:

The Saltire Scholars Undergraduate Internship Programme gives undergraduate students with huge potential and ambition – most of whom may not otherwise have access to such opportunities – the chance to experience the working environment of highly successful firms or high growth entrepreneurial companies at home and abroad. The Programme is open to all penultimate year students at Scottish universities, and each university with participating students contributes funding to the programme.

<http://www.saltirefoundation.com/UndergraduateInternshipProgramme/TheProgramme.aspx>

Description:

The Careers Centre currently co-ordinates two undergraduate internship programmes:

- The St Andrews Summer Internship Scheme, where administrative units throughout the University provide project based-work experience for 2nd and 3rd year students for 4 to 6 weeks during the summer vacation. More information: http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/wiki/St_Andrews_Summer_Internship_Scheme
- Santander-supported Summer Internships, where small to medium-sized employers in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK receive joint funding from Santander and the University of St Andrews to provide student internships. The internships are sourced and promoted by a Careers Centre intern (funded by the programme) who also supports the employers during the project design and recruitment and selection processes.
- In addition, since 2007, the Careers Centre has worked closely with the Saltire Foundation to promote the Saltire Scholars Undergraduate Internship Programme to students. It also provides considerable resource in supporting students throughout the application and interview process.

Pamela Forbes, a 2012 Saltire Scholar, effectively illustrates the benefits to students of taking part in a structured internship programme:

During my third year at the University of St Andrews, I was made aware of internship opportunities awarded by the Saltire Foundation. Having grown up in a family where no one had gone to university or worked in a profession, I was unaware just how important and valuable internships could be for self-development and networking.

Still unsure about whether an internship would be viable for me (I had worries about moving away from Fife and how much it may cost me personally) I attended one of the Saltire Foundation information sessions held at the University. Hearing different stories about how internships both in the UK and internationally benefitted students in terms of their personal, academic and professional development, I became very enthusiastic about applying.

Having had a variety of jobs since the age of 16, I had never up to that point had to complete an application form, CV or covering letter. At this point, I decided to seek advice and support from the University Career Centre. They helped me prepare for both the initial application and subsequent interviews and generally helped me build up my skills and confidence to apply for other opportunities outwith this.

I was invited to Ulverston, England to interview for the role of marketing and communications intern with GlaxoSmithKline. I was awarded the internship and worked for ten weeks with GSK throughout the summer of 2012.

The internship itself was an absolutely amazing experience. As well as boosting my confidence in my professional potential, I was given the opportunity to develop skills which helped me succeed in later experiences. For example, at the end of the internship, I was asked to stand up in front of the managerial board of the site and run through my research and accomplishments on site. In general, I was a relatively shy and timid third year university student but, having to talk to different team members across the site on a regular basis and then present my findings in front of the board, boosted my confidence in public speaking. This then helped me prepare for a presentation I gave for the University in London to promote donations to scholarship funds with Prince William.

The internship also afforded an opportunity to network with people involved in different professions which gave me the chance to learn and explore other career paths after university. I was also asked to interview for the next year of Saltire scholars and to take part in some of the events held by Saltire after my internship.

Living away from Fife for the ten weeks of my internship also confirmed my love of travel and need to see new things outside of my comfort zone. It was ultimately because of my internship experience that I applied and was awarded the Bobby Jones Scholarship; a year of fully funded study, work and travel in the United States. When applying for this scholarship, I also took advantage of advice from the Careers Centre. If it were not for the advice and support I received from the Careers Centre during my time at the university, I believe I would not have had access to the amazing experiences I had during my undergraduate journey or have developed skills so important to life after university.

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