

## Case Study: Alumni

**Eros, Computing (BEng)**

**Graduation Year:** 2008

**Job Title:** Application Developer

**Employer:** Bank of America Merrill Lynch

**Department:** Electronic Trading Technology

**Special Note:** Eros lost his sight during his study.



**Could you give us some information about yourself and your role?**

In the penultimate year of my BEng computing degree, by which time I had lost all reading sight, I applied for a summer internship at Merrill Lynch. Because the online mathematical test was not accessible for blind users, I was invited to complete it in person with the aid of an amanuensis (a person who reads questions and performs calculations according to the instructions the candidate provides). I was then asked to take part in an assessment centre. Again the help that was offered to me was perfect. I had an amanuensis who helped me to write on A3 paper as part of my presentation. Also I was provided with the same materials as sighted candidates received on a USB stick that I could access using my laptop. I was fortunate enough to be offered a 10 week summer internship at the bank.

**“One thing I would strongly recommend is to do your best to obtain a summer internship.”**

- Eros

Before it began, an external consultant was brought in to assess what applications were not compatible with my screen reading software and scripts were written so I could comfortably access them. The bank organised an adjustment assessment through the governmental scheme, Access to Work. I familiarised myself with my route from the tube station to the office, and the bank's head of Diversity & Inclusion ensured I was comfortable making my way around both the department where I'd be working, and the other important areas I would need to get to within the bank. The bank also set up a taxi account for me, should I need to use it.

I had a great time during my internship! I learnt new development skills that one would only probably pick up when working. I was offered a full time role which I accepted and began the following summer of 2008.

Before starting my new role, I joined all the bank's graduates on a five week training programme in New York and Toronto.

Once again, the HR and Diversity & Inclusion teams at Merrill Lynch were fantastic! As much as possible was planned for beforehand through conference calls with the US and Canada HR teams. The trip was a great success. In fact, the support my managers and team have provided during my three and a half years of work has been amazing.



My development software, Eclipse IDE, is accessible so I can quite happily work away without any difficulties whatsoever.

I guess my biggest challenge came during the recent merger with Bank of America as their external vendor systems are different to those used by Merrill Lynch. However, the bank has been fantastic in quickly ironing out these wrinkles and I must say, I continue to be impressed by the way in which everyone does their best to help me and find alternative solutions.

I'd say the most satisfying part of my job is how we start off with a list of requirements on paper; work together to come up with an implementation strategy and then roll out a new application.

Everyone here works incredibly hard – but we also like to have a good time. There's a great atmosphere in the office – and we frequently go to the pub together after work. The upbeat, positive culture in the Electronic Trading Technology team is fantastic.

### **Can you tell us about your time at Imperial College?**

No one can dispute the quality of the courses taught at Imperial College London. I have heard from various managers that Imperial graduates frequently stand out from other institutions during the interview process.

Something I learned at Imperial - which I am sure I would not have learned at another university - was how to deal with my deteriorating disability. I joined Imperial with a minor eye-sight disability and by my final year I was completely blind.

The Department of Computing (DoC), in particular Margaret Cunningham, the Senior Tutor, and the PhD students helped me with the course material I had difficulty accessing (those with extensive diagrams and Maths). This instilled in me the importance of prioritising projects and communicating with people when I needed something rather than suffering in silence.

In my conversations with disabled students at other universities, none received the help and guidance that I did from Imperial.

It was not all smooth sailing I must say - I certainly had a pretty tough time due to my disability. But I always had more than enough support from others around me – and was also provided with assistive technology. Imperial purchased a CCTV magnifier so I could enlarge my notes and when I lost all reading sight, they set up a designated PC for me in the labs which had speech software installed on it.

Adapting to my constantly changing disability was a learning process for not only me – but for those around me too – but I'll be eternally grateful to my friends, tutors, the charity Blind in Business and now my bank colleagues for always being so willing to explore different pathways until the best one was identified.

### **Could you give us one or more career tips for Imperial graduates?**

One thing I would strongly recommend is to do your best to obtain a summer internship - and don't be intimidated by the thought of working at a large UK or global corporation or financial institution.

I remember avoiding applying for internships because I felt I didn't have enough knowledge and didn't feel I was good enough. But I discovered that Imperial had equipped me with all the essential knowledge and more – including the concepts I needed to go into more depth on projects I was involved in.

At Merrill Lynch I had a Tech mentor who could guide me in my work, discussing with me the design and implementation ideas I had. I always had good leadership and guidance but by no means was I 'micro-managed'.

During an internship, your skills and interests are considered so the right type of work is assigned to you.

Obtaining a summer internship and successfully being offered a full time role at the end of it, meant I could concentrate on my final year studies and not have to worry about applying for full time jobs which would have added to the pressure.