

Work Experience & Internships

Work experience gives you an opportunity to learn and develop key skills that employers regard as important and helps you to decide on your career. It can help you earn money, increase your employability, generate some future career ideas, and enhance your CV.

Here are some types of work experience:

Summer Internships - these can last from 6 to 12 weeks. Schemes offered by large graduate recruiters are usually advertised to penultimate year students as they hope to convert many summer interns into graduate hires. Deadlines are often in the autumn term.

Other Internships - some companies offer shorter internships over the Easter or Christmas vacation period. You may also find “insight” days or weeks primarily for first years (or second years on a four year course). These are designed to give you a taster of the industry and often include work shadowing and training sessions.

Industrial placements - these are usually fixed terms of structured work experience, typically 6 or 12 months, forming part of the degree course.

Casual and part-time work - this is also an opportunity for developing your skills whilst earning money. This is not always confined to the summer vacations and includes working in shops, pubs and bars, factories, restaurants, etc. The importance of such experience should not be overlooked; employers value it, as it develops transferable skills such as customer service experience and communicating effectively (especially useful if your first language isn't English) as well as team-work and commercial awareness.

Voluntary work - this can consist of all kinds of projects, in the UK or abroad in vacation time. It also includes volunteering part-time during term. The amount of responsibility given varies from project to project but can be quite significant. One example would be to undertake voluntary tutoring at a local school (via Imperial's 'Pimlico Connection'). This experience could provide evidence of qualities such as initiative, commitment, communication and leadership as well as teaching experience for those interested in exploring this career option.

FINDING WORK EXPERIENCE

Advertised schemes and internships - You can find these via JobsLive on the Careers website - www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive. You'll be able to specify the type of work experience

you're looking for and you can sign up to have vacancies emailed to you. In addition, see further websites suggested on the next page.

Networking and speculative approaches - This method can work well too, especially if you have good contacts in the job sector that you are interested in. And if you have no contacts, consider asking friends and relatives and their friends and relatives, academic staff and people you may meet at careers fairs. The handout on 'Networking' gives further tips.

Recruitment agencies - Many recruitment agencies have a temp department. Consider signing up for casual and part-time work and have a look at the handout on 'Finding Part-Time Work'.

Research experience - At Imperial you can also apply to one of the many research vacancies that are advertised via UROP (see www.imperial.ac.uk/urop). This can be particularly useful if you are thinking of a future career in research or academia.

Volunteering - There are many volunteering schemes, not only in the UK, but also worldwide. The Careers Service provides sources of information on volunteering schemes (see over the page).

Overseas work experience - There are many programmes on offer and some useful resources for projects can be found on the next page and on our handout 'Taking a Year Out'.

PROVIDING THE EVIDENCE

- Keep a log or a diary and make notes of your learning and any contacts you make, their job titles, email addresses and/or telephone numbers.
- Reflect on what you do. What strengths are you discovering? What do you perhaps find trickier? Is there anything you could improve on, whilst at work? How might you go about doing this?
- List the skills you are developing and how you have used them in practice. For example, have you worked with any clients/customers, contributed to a team with ideas, analysed any numerical data or written reports?

USEFUL WEBSITES

- **Imperial College Placement & Internship Advisers** - offer weekly appointments to help you find and apply for internship opportunities. They also run the Charity Insights internship scheme which offers bursaries for students to take four week internships in the charity sector.



www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/internships

- **Target Jobs** - offers information and advice on internships, placements, work experience
www.targetjobs.co.uk/internships

Work Experience Abroad

- **GoInGlobal** - offers career and employment resources including worldwide job openings, internship listings, industry profiles and country-specific career information
www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/opportunities/abroad
- **Prospects** -
www.prospects.ac.uk/links/countries

Work Experience Schemes in the UK and Abroad

- **Civil Service** - internships aimed at people from an ethnic minority background and those from under-represented socio-economic backgrounds.
www.faststream.gov.uk
- **Engineers without Borders** - EWB is helping to build a world where everyone has access to the technology and infrastructure they need to defeat poverty. They are offering students and new professionals the opportunity to work with partner development organisations across the world
www.ewb-uk.org & www.ewb-uk.org/ewb-imperial
- **IAESTE** - International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience, active in over 80 countries, aims to provide technical students with paid course-related vacation work abroad
www.iaeste.org.uk
- **STEP** - offers students and recent graduates paid work placements of varying lengths of time in small and medium sized firms throughout the UK
www.step.org.uk
- **UROPE** - The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme provides an opportunity for undergraduates to participate in research projects
www.imperial.ac.uk/urop

Volunteering

- **Volunteer Centre Kensington and Chelsea** -
www.voluntarywork.org.uk
- **One Westminster** -
www.onewestminster.org.uk
- **Volunteering in the UK** -
www.timebank.org.uk; www.do-it.org.uk
- **Volunteering Abroad** -
www.vso.org.uk (see also handout 'Taking a Year Out')

FURTHER SUPPORT

Available from the Careers Service:

- **Careers Service website:** www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/internships
- **Bookable appointments** with Careers Consultants: book through **JobsLive***
- **Reference books** - including: 'Managing Your Placement', Ian Herbert and Andrew Rothwell; 'Making the Most of Your Placement', Neugebauer and Evans- Brain; 'Live and Work in the USA', Eleanor Turner; 'Summer Jobs Worldwide', Vacation Work, available in the Careers Service, level 5 Sherfield Building
- **Careers Service events** - each year we plan talks and workshops which are designed to enhance your chances of success in the application process - for details, see **JobsLive***
- For information on the disclosure of disability or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia please see information on the Careers Service website: www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/disclosure

* www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive