

International Internships & Diverse Student Experiences

Striking a balance: opportunities to valuable skills while managing the complexities of an international placement



Objectives of this session

- Consider the value of international internship placements
- Consider the challenges related to interning abroad
- Define 'diverse students' in relation to placements abroad
- Consider the challenges related to specific diverse groups
- Discuss services/programmes/staffing to support & encourage diverse students on international placements



What is the value of an international placement?

- cultivate adaptability/flexibility/ cultural exposure
- learn cross-cultural competencies including language skills
- gain industry insight internationally/career exploration opportunities
- explore career pathways and develop industry skills
- develop competencies that will transfer to work or further study/enhanced employability
- gain professional confidence and take on new responsibilities
- network with useful international contacts
- discover different approaches to work within the industry



What are the challenges of interning abroad?

- Culture shock on a number of levels & adjustments required to carry on
- Potential language acquisition difficulty/stress
- Logistical issues/accessibility/access to resources
- Financial constraints/stress
- Different workplace/professional expectations
- New living situation & working environment
- New colleagues, workplace supervisor, housemates
- Family/friend support system is at a distance causing isolation & loneliness
- Cultural discrimination particularly toward LGBTQIA+ and BAME students
- Personal exploration



When we talk about 'diverse students' who do we mean?

- Low income
- First gen university student
- Additional physical needs
- Neurodiverse
- Mature student
- LGBTQIA+
- BAME



What challenges would diverse students encounter abroad?

- Cultural stereotyping & perception of their identity being different from their home country
- 'Insensitive' means of communication
- High costs/ financial burden or constraints
- Often first 'abroad' experience due to lack of access to travel
- Feeling isolated/alone & homesick, lack of integration with their cohort
- Continuous adjustment at home & work
- Health & safety challenges
- Difficulties communicating and being heard



Diverse Alumni Case Studies from Absolute Internships



Alexandra
Legal in
Barcelona

"I worked at an international law firm under the sector that I want to focus on as a future Latina lawyer...it really inspired me to take a step back and think about the endless possibilities that I have because of this opportunity. [Working] for such an amazing company, and an international one too, really opens your eyes to the possibilities that you never imagined before."

Alexandra was a recipient of Absolute Internship's Diverse Community Fund Scholarship.



Imani
Human Resources in
Singapore

Imani worked for an intelligent SAAS hiring platform. They use a data based approach to offer selections that are objective with the goal of reducing bias in the hiring process. They have offices all over the world and have offices in APAC, India, UK, and UAE.

Imani currently works for **Eli Lilly and Company** as the US Immunology Strategy and Operations Associate Director.

Case study from Brunel University London



Placements are a great way for students to learn more than what is covered in classrooms and laboratories. Students will gain a sense of real responsibility - projects and tasks in companies will affect millions of people or even the company's revenue, and this is something that graduates without placement experience struggle to understand.

Kirill, Undergraduate
Computer Science (Artificial Intelligence) BSc
From UK





Case study from Richmond American University London

I spent the last term of my postgraduate course interning at an international bank in London as a Trade Service Analyst. I was a banker in my home country for 12 years before coming to the UK to start this course. I have gained helpful insight into the banking industry in the UK and have made international connections that will help me further my career.

Fazla

**MSc in International Business Management
From India**

DISCUSSION:

How can we encourage diverse student groups to take part in international placements & how can we support them before, during and after their placements?



Suggestions/ Best Practices:

Pre-Placement



- **Interactive application process**
Clear guidelines for: type of placement, visa, housing, cost, expectations, potential challenges and identified concerns & support in country, provide contacts for mentors/alumni who have completed the same programme, make funding available where possible, offer accessibility assessments before departure
- **Pre-departure briefing**
Practical information about arrivals including airport, transport, currency, cultural overview and expectations, cultural information

Suggestions/ Best Practices:

During the placement

- **Support during placement**
Open dialogue with intern on challenges and tools to use to manage conflict/uncomfortable situations, group and local culture integration/immersion focused on students from diverse backgrounds including activities, workshops and educational sessions



Suggestions/ Best Practices:

Post Placement

- **Post placement review**
Learn from the students' experiences what makes a great placement & what can be done to pre-empt problems (evaluation & improvement), reintegration support, alumni network + recruit ambassadors, career development resources

