



Developing Your Experience

School of Informatics UG3

Your third year at university is a great time to take stock and assess whether you are on track to develop your professionalism and achieve your goals when you graduate. A good starting point is to review the range and level of experience you have gained both within and outside of your degree course so far; and then to consider what options are open to you over the coming year.

Internship & vacation work

Internships are **formal work experience placements** generally offered during the summer. Students work on business based **projects**. Training is provided and performance monitored, as students are often screened for **future graduate jobs**. Consequently the application procedure tends to be as rigorous as for graduate posts and placements are often (though not always) aimed at **penultimate year students**. Internships are usually well paid and enhance your CV.

Internships are usually offered by **larger organisations/multinationals** who recruit significant numbers of students – e.g. engineering, IT, pharmaceutical and manufacturing companies, accountancy firms, investment and retail banks, city of law firms, and management consultancies.

Smaller Firms also offer project-based work experience:

- **E-Placement Scotland** is an **IT work placement** initiative for students studying in Scotland. A range of placements, from 3 – 12 months - www.e-placementscotland.com .
- The **STEP programme**, www.step.org.uk, offers 8 week business related projects with small companies employing less than 250 people. Participants can also give presentations about their project at local/regional/national level, which are assessed by a panel of judges.

Finding opportunities - Adverts

SAGE, Edinburgh's student and graduate employment site, www.ed.ac.uk/careers/sage offers an extensive range of vacation (semester-time & graduate) opportunities. Other useful sites include:

- Prospects - www.prospects.ac.uk
- Target Jobs - www.targetjobs.co.uk/work-experience
- Inside Careers - www.insidecareers.co.uk
- E-Placement Scotland - www.e-placementscotland.com

The annual **Careers Service Guide** contains employers' adverts. This and take away copies of **vacation work guides** can be collected from the Careers Service. **Reference books** such as *Summer Jobs UK*, *Internship USA* can be consulted for more ideas.

Advice on gaining experience can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/careers > *Looking for work* > *Getting work experience*

Finding opportunities - Events

Careers fairs and **employers' presentations** are a great way of finding out what's on offer and to network with employers. The main **Careers Fair** will be held **9/10 October**. On-line events will offer international opportunities in North America & Canada; and China & South East Asia. A Global Experiences event will interest those who would like to spend a short time abroad. **Check out what's going on at:** www.ed.ac.uk/careers/talks-events

Also keep an eye on the School of Informatics website for additional events and opportunities.

Working abroad

- **Saltire Foundation** www.saltirefoundation.com - international business placements in leading global firms. Placements, 8 weeks June to Aug, are open to ambitious penultimate year students who are passionate about representing Scotland. Online applications close on 22 November.
- **IAESTE**, www.iaeste.org.uk - placements around the world for pre-final year Science and Engineering students. Application closing date in early December.
- **Council Exchanges (CIEE)**, www.britishcouncil.org - opportunities for students & graduates to work, travel, teach and learn abroad. Paid and voluntary positions are available.
- **AIESEC**, www.aiesec.co.uk - technical & management placements for 3 – 12 months
- **BUNAC**, www.bunac.org.uk - provides help with visa, travel arrangements, and casual work in US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Alternatives

Christmas or Easter courses/open days

These are offered by some larger companies, to give an insight into their business and roles offered. These last 2-3 days and include case-studies, team exercises and presentations about available opportunities. They can provide good experience prior to internships.

Work shadowing/Visits

- Spending a few days “shadowing” someone lets you experience the day to day reality of their workplace. For some types of work, such as conservation and environmental roles, medical careers, public relations, advertising, broadcasting and publishing where there are fewer formal work placement schemes, this can be a good way of demonstrating your commitment.
- Requesting to visit an organisation, or a short meeting with a staff member, can lead to useful insights. Visits could be requested by a group of students/society or by individuals. This is useful where work placements are uncommon e.g. planning departments, or civil service departments.

Vacation work & semester jobs

Usually it's the biggest firms who offer structured vacation placements/internships however less formal **vacation work** and **semester jobs** of all types can be found.

Volunteering

The value of **volunteering** should not be underestimated. If, for example, you are interested in environmental/ conservation work, voluntary or media sectors, it is worth building experience in this way. Volunteering with youth groups helps if you are interested in a teaching career. For a guide to volunteering see - www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/explore/volunteering/overview

Scholarships

Scholarships which can help fund practical work experience/research abroad during the Summer Vacation can be found at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-funding/current-students

Student societies

Student societies offer opportunities to get involved in something you are interested in, to challenge yourself in positions of responsibility, and even to take on roles which could develop career related skills e.g. developing a society's website, acting as treasurer, organising an event or becoming President.

Are all opportunities advertised?

No! The key to finding what you want is to **be proactive**. Many organisations do not advertise simply because they do not need to. Keen students often approach organisations which interest them directly.

Some career areas in particular require a more proactive approach; including advertising, marketing, PR, journalism and some scientific areas. By applying speculatively **students unearth far more vacation jobs than are actually advertised**. Approaching employers speculatively is not as daunting as it may sound. For advice see *Finding unadvertised vacancies* within the Careers Service's *Looking for work* website section. Websites for professional / industry organisations are often a good starting place for identifying potential employers (e.g. www.scotlandis.com).

When to look for opportunities?

Early planning is essential. Fairs and employer presentations start in October. Closing dates can begin then too! Large companies may request vacation applications before the end of the first Semester. Many smaller organisations will advertise early in the New Year... but last-minute opportunities can sometimes be found or created by enterprising students!

Where can I get help?

The Careers Service provides on-line advice and a hub for careers research www.ed.ac.uk/careers The Careers Service opens all year round and you are welcome to use information centre resources at any time. Adviser appointments are available daily, just ask at Reception or phone 0131 650 4670.

A 'drop-in' time for School of Informatics students will be offered most Wednesdays during semesters.

Graduate Attributes – understanding GAs

Graduate attributes - the skills, abilities and approaches which students have the opportunity to develop while at University – are shaped by both their academic and non-academic experiences. An introduction to graduate Attributes can be found at www.employability.ed.ac.uk/documents/PTS/PT-GA-Intro.pdf .

Getting the Edinburgh Edge – how you can stand out

The Edinburgh Edge is all about: **knowing** and **developing** your **strengths**, **having evidence** for your **abilities** and **achievements**, and **being confident** about the best way to **communicate all of this** to potential recruiters. To find out more and to access related resources have a look at: www.employability.ed.ac.uk/Student/index.html

Professionalism in IT – some resources to explore the IT sector

- BCS – Professionalism programme - www.bcs.org/category/7532
- BCS – Career development - www.bcs.org/category/9233
- Skills Framework for the Information Age - www.sfia.org.uk/cdv4/usefulstuff/ReferenceGuideSFIAv4.pdf
- Technology Insights 2021 – e skills UK - www.e-skills.com/research/research-publications/insights-reports-and-videos/technology-insights-2012/

And lastly....advice from a recruiter:

“Use your time whilst you are at University to develop the skills that will enable you to secure your dream job. The majority of people who attend University will leave with a good degree - what makes you stand out from the rest?”

(Business Development Manager, Graduate Recruitment, Proctor & Gamble)

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expanding horizons

www.careers.ed.ac.uk