

CoSS undergraduate internship bursary scheme

Final Report – Outcomes

The main objectives of this project, funded by the Alumni Giving Fund, was to offer students within the College of Social Sciences who were likely to be disadvantaged in the labour market an opportunity to develop their employability skills, enhance their personal development, and support their career aspirations. Interest in the scheme within the college was strong, with over 50 students requesting an application form, and the scheme's £5000 budget was ultimately divided between thirteen successful applicants.

Students undertook an impressively diverse range of internships or placements, with at least one student from each of the college's four schools receiving a bursary. Bursary winners worked in areas such as marketing and PR, tourism, teaching, crisis support for the Red Cross, research, and community sport activities. The thirteen successful applicants were asked to write a report on their experiences, which show clearly that the main objectives of the project were met.

Cassandra Barnett, now in the final year of her BA Sociology programme, worked at Storm Communications in Southwark, London over the summer, and says that the people she worked with were 'great, so friendly and always happy to help'. To her surprise, the managing director was an alumnus of the University of Birmingham and did a similar degree, which, says Cassandra, is 'very reassuring'. Cassandra was fully involved with Storm PR's clients, and enjoyed some really useful experiences, such as attending meetings at the News International building. She also gained an invaluable insight into working life in London.

All the students felt that their placements enhanced their employability skills. Sohaib Ahmed is studying BSc Mathematical Economics and Statistics, and worked over the summer as a Research Associate intern within the University of Birmingham's Centre for Household Assets and Savings Management. Sohaib learned new statistical methods during his placement, and further developed his written communication skills through writing a briefing paper on Islamic finance, which has been published on the centre's website.



Asima Ali (pictured left working at Somerville Primary School), on the other hand, is in the second year of her BA Sociology degree and worked as a Teaching Assistant at Somerville Primary School in Small Heath, Birmingham. She says that the role allowed her to build upon her existing skills and develop new ones, such as 'patience, listening skills, [and] having a good sense of interacting with others'.

The placements likewise aided students' personal development. Asima says that 'no two days were the same, every day brought new challenges but it was a fantastic to see how children were keen and had the willingness to learn'. This feeling is echoed by Janet Nambuya, now in the second year of her BA Social Policy degree programme, who worked within crisis support at the Red Cross. Janet enjoyed the placement a great deal, and says that she was 'blown away by [her] ability to fit in easily and work well in a team'.

One of the most successful aspects of the project was the support that it gave to students' career aspirations. Prior to her time at Somerville Primary School, Asima was unsure whether she wanted to pursue a career in teaching, but the placement showed her that this really is what she wants to do after she graduates, and it will, she says, form the basis of an application onto a PGCE course.



Dominika Kaczowska (pictured left, working in Muirhead Tower), studying BA European Politics, Society and Economics with International Study Year, had a similar experience working as a Research Assistant on the University of Birmingham research project 'Exploring the Role of the EU in Domestic Change in the Post-Soviet States'. Dominika was involved in researching the European Union's influence on Moldovan domestic politics, an experience she found extremely valuable, because she intends to undertake a PhD and says that the 'insight in this research project allowed me to understand what I can expect in my future as the researcher'.

Overall, the project was a great success, and students were very grateful to alumni for the funds that they donated. Moreover several students commented that the experience would be a great addition to their CV and would like to thank the Careers and Employability Centre for helping to support their opportunity. Finally, Janet would like to thank alumni for the bursary over the summer, which has demonstrated to her that she wants to work with people in her future career. She has derived 'so much joy' from helping clients and continues to volunteer for the Red Cross – 'I have two more sessions [acting] under supervision before working independently', says Janet, and 'cannot wait' to do so.

To see a selection of student reports from the scheme please [click here](#).

November 2011