

Q&A

DI PILLING SET UP AUSTRALIAN INTERNSHIPS NINE YEARS AGO. SHE ANSWERS OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT HER BUSINESS.



Company name: Australian Internships
Year established: 1998
Main business: Professional internships
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Q How is business developing at Australian Internships?
 Australian Internships saw a 10 per cent growth in application numbers from 2005 to 2006. The 2006 launch of the Professional Paid Hospitality Programme was a great success. In 2007, we shall be introducing the Australian Abroad program; a reciprocal program for Australians wishing to go abroad to complete internships, undertake language programmes, volunteer programmes or au pair courses in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Brazil, Ghana, the UK, China, the USA, Chile and Peru.

Q Which nationalities are most likely to enrol on your internship courses?
 We currently work with 62 nationalities worldwide for internships in Australia. Close to 30 per cent of all interns in Australia are German. High enrolments also come from Japan, France, India, Korea, the USA, the Philippines, Brazil, the Netherlands and Mexico.

Q How do you promote your courses internationally?
 We participate in the leading career and agents' fairs throughout Australia and the globe and promote the programme in a variety of magazines and websites annually. We have also established partnerships with several leading universities and agencies around the world.

Q Why did you set up Australian Internships?
 My personal reason for setting up the business was a passion and dream to be part of the industry that brings the world to our youth!

STUDENT PROFILE



Student Name: Julia Munhos
Nationality: Brazilian
Age: 23
Placement: Paid work at the Grange Hotel, London
Placed by: Aspect Career Services

EMPLOYER OVERVIEW:
 The Grange City Hotel is a five-star facility located centrally in London near the world famous Tower of London and the financial district. It boasts 307 bedrooms, conference facilities and a luxury health club. Part of a chain of London-based hotels, the Grange City also has three restaurants.

- JOB ENTAILS:**
- Setting up conference rooms
 - Working in the bar for reception drinks and cash bar during functions
 - Blocking spaces for conferences in the computer system
 - Checking emails and forwarding on information to specific members of staff
 - Printing menus for dinner and lunch functions
 - Printing the function sheets and distributing them to all the departments in the hotel

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK:
 "I have really enjoyed working in the Grange City Hotel. I started as a waitress and now I'm an events coordinator. The team is great, my English skills have improved a lot and it is a big step for my career as well. The Aspect team has definitely helped me to achieve my goal in hospitality. I'm having a great time working and studying in London, and I will probably stay here longer than I had planned."



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INTERNSHIPS IN THE UK

UNPAID PROFESSIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS – INTERNSHIPS – ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN A NUMBER OF STUDY DESTINATIONS; THEY ARE A TAILORED PLACEMENT THAT CAN OFFER STUDENTS THE CHANCE TO LEARN AND INTERACT IN A PARTICULAR BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT WHILE UNDERTAKING BASIC DUTIES. AMY BAKER INVESTIGATES THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNSHIP MARKET IN THE UK.

Students undertake internships to develop cultural and linguistic competencies, gain practical experience as a complement to previous classroom study and improve their CV," says Duncan Cameron of LAF in Brighton – an internship organiser that works directly with students and UK language schools as their placement provider.

He sums up the appeal of internships – real workplace experience can be a fast-track career move, and they afford a very valuable cultural and linguistic insight gained by working every day with native speakers of a student's target language. At the Training Partnership in Torquay, Jayne Stroud observes that within Europe, students want to overcome barriers and be able to move freely within the European Union (EU). "The English language and employment are underlying issues," she notes.

The UK is quite a well-established internship destination, with numerous language schools offering tailored work placement packages and specialist companies offering internships too. The Training Partnership has been in the business for 10 years, while Twin Group in London started offering internships in 1992. "It was the first thing Twin ever did," recounts

VISAS FOR INTERNSHIPS

All nationalities can apply to undertake an internship. Nationals from the European Union have no special visa requirements, while non-EU nationals enter the country on a student visa and the internship placement must form part of their full-time education programme.

Carolle Rayner at Aspect Career Services points out that the student visa must authorise permission for part-time work and for an unpaid professional internship during a stay in the UK (minimum length of programme is six months).

One problem for non-EU students is that they have to pay to undertake a language course as well as the internship at the moment, she observes.



Tommi Muttonen of Twin Group. "Most of our competition had language schools and then added internships – we did it the other way around!"

Many providers have a European focus to their clientele but all place clients who come from further afield. Muttonen cites France, Spain, Italy, Korea, Japan and China as their most important markets in this sector, adding, "We are getting increasing numbers from Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia and the USA."

Nick Roadnight at Tellus Group in Plymouth – its language school offered work experience via a third party before the group branched into organising placements itself – cites a stronger European bias of 90 per cent of clientele. He says, "We see internships for those outside of the EU growing once new visa rules are fully implemented."

Meanwhile, at the Training Partnership, Stroud also says that Western Europeans are the most typical nationalities that they place, although she says increasing numbers of Romanians and Polish now enrol too – "they really value the opportunity of gaining an understanding of the UK work ethic and culture and tend to take their internship period far more seriously," she says.

All providers in this sector make the point that the attitude of the intern is imperative to the success of a placement. Muttonen states, "The most common problem regards unrealistic and inflated expectations on the client's side." He relates that on occasions, students expect a far more senior role than can be justified, "or they may expect a full-time training course rather than to work independently". Stroud points out that this is something that should be carefully considered by sending organisations they work with too.

Most organisations place students in a range of different companies – marketing, IT, finance/accounts, tourism and international

trade are popular areas of focus. "More companies are interested in taking on interns," states Carolle Rayner, Internship Programme Manager at Aspect Career Services in London. As a result of growing awareness about the internship market, she adds that there is also "greater general understanding by employers about the objectives of work placements."

The future is certainly set to see good growth, according to many providers. Roadnight says, "Our levels of enquiries for 2007 and 2008 are up significantly, up 38 per cent for 2007." He adds, "Overall, we see the market growing although there are more players in the market so it will inevitably become more competitive."

Muttonen at Twin makes the point that an overseas internship is increasingly becoming a part of a student's studies in some countries – thus fuelling market

growth. "We are also expecting growth at the top end of the market, for example our graduate training programme, where we source particularly challenging placements for university graduates with excellent English skills," he says.

Several internship operators observe that with market evolution and expansion may come regulation. "Licensing and accreditation will become an issue as soon as standards of delivery vary widely across the sector," says Roadnight. Although there is still no national regulation scheme in the UK for language schools, and therefore some delay might be expected before regulation reaches this sector, a self-endorsed code of conduct among providers is not unfeasible.

Stroud observes that she has already seen a huge change in the concept of professional work experience in 10 years. "This is a market that will continue to expand as long as there is a regulatory board that insists upon quality, professionalism and integrity," she says.

"There is also greater general understanding by employers about the objectives of work placements"

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