

Year in industry – Yvonne’s Testimonial

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Why did you decide to take a year in industry?

I’ve had friends and family whom had taken a year in industry during their time at uni and often told me it’s a good experience and you learn a lot from it. **I wanted to take a 1 yr placement, as I wanted a long-term experience of what it’s like to work in a profession I want to pursue (finance).** Being on a one-year placement will give me a better idea of what exactly in my career I want to do as well as prepare me for the work life.

What was the most challenging part of any application for you? How did you overcome it?

I probably found **video interviews** the most challenging. I overcame this through creating a mind-map of key areas to talk about e.g. myself, experiences, what skills I’ve shown, extra-curricular activities, etc. This helped me a lot in guiding where to start as a basis for my video interview prepping. On top of that, it’s also very useful to search on Glassdoor previous asked questions and practice answers to that. To get myself comfortable with the camera before each Video interview, I would also **record myself practicing video interviews** ranging from generic competency questions, to specific searched-up questions I found online.

What have you learnt from the whole application process that will be helpful when looking for a graduate role?

Prepare as much as possible will help. Take time to learn your answers, your experiences and skills and abilities that you can confidently talk about when comes to your video interviews and in-person interviews. We all have different prep methods, for me **mind-maps** helped immensely, creating a tracker sheet on excel, writing a list of questions that potentially could be asked and answer them as full as possible.

Another thing would be to apply as early as possible. This way you can apply to as many opportunities as possible before exam period starts. Although I managed to secure a placement (during late summer, near to the deadline) my regret was that I didn’t apply earlier as this is when most of positions have opened up, and it’s when you have time before exams start, and saves you the stress of applying to positions all summer.

I have also learnt to be a lot more organised now through my application process in finding a

placement. For example, I created a file on excel to track company, role, application date, status, other notes. I set aside at least 1-2 hours (either first thing in morning or last thing at night) everyday just to apply to placements and get that out of the way for the day. Creating folders on my computer and organising where my cover letters for companies, CVs, specific interview prepping for each company went helped too. When you start your applications organised, it makes everything else a little bit easier.

What is your opinion on the support and opportunities available at the School of Economics and Finance for finding an industrial placement? E.g. careers and application advice, relevant societies, fairs and events.

SEF had been quite helpful in providing support and advice whilst finding a placement last year. When I started the application process, I booked weekly careers appointments to check my CV and Cover Letter and to get advice for interviews. **I would recommend making frequent careers appointment or even booking time with your advisors.** What was also helpful was **the support they provided online**, like how to structure your cover letter, STAR method, lists of sites for placement openings, and placement newsletters on top of the applications you researched yourself. Many societies at QM organise **lots of events** too to network and learn through panels of successful professionals who can give advice and give you a better idea of what they do. I'd recommend making the most of that as it can give you a clearer idea what you may want to do and can offer a lot of tips.

What advice would you give to students who are looking for their industrial placements now?

Start early as possible, and make sure you apply to as many as possible – keep an open mind to roles out there. **Being organised** – organising folders on your desktop to sort out your CVS, cover letters, interview prep, which company they're for etc, creating a tracker sheet so you are aware of which positions you've applied to and can keep track of the status, date (how long since you've last heard from them), next steps, other notes and ALWAYS update it.

Finding a method to help yourself during the application and interview process will help. I utilised mindmaps a lot, e.g. mindmaps of my CV (my previous jobs and experience, hobbies, what exact skills I exhibited from each – useful base when talking about myself in interviews), mindmaps of the company itself (background, research, questions to ask, their previously asked q's to candidates + my rough answers to them). However, different methods work for everyone whether it may be flash notes, writing up answers, practicing speech etc.

Also, **do not be discouraged if you receive many rejections** – keep going and there will still be opportunities and openings going even during summer (but try best to apply early as possible)!

What would you say to students who are not sure they want to do a full year out of university?

I would say go for it! It's definitely a good learning experience as you're spending the year out, there's so much you can learn about the industry, the role, and from colleagues. It's a long-term

experience compared to summer internships, **so you really get a taste of the working world before you finish uni** and land a job, and it will really give you a clearer idea of what you want to do after uni career-wise. It prepares you for your future after you finish your degree.

Did you receive many rejections? What advice would you give to students having a tough time with rejections?

Yes, I received many rejections all the way throughout the year. However, don't feel discouraged, as there are still plenty opportunities to apply for – it's not the end. When I kept receiving lots of rejections I wanted to give up and I thought I wouldn't be able to receive an offer, however, I still wanted to pursue a placement, so **I spent my summer constantly applying for placements and luckily I managed to receive 2 offers a week before the deadline to secure a placement**. I don't recommend leaving placement searching late as there is a lot of stress and uncertainty, however, I do recommend you **keep going despite rejections and timing**.

What are three things that you are enjoying the most about your current role?

Working environment: We have a quite laid-back working environment at UMG, a casual atmosphere and we play music in the office everyday too. It's not too intense here but there are times where it becomes focused and quiet, which is perfect to me as I enjoy not feeling too pressured at work but having time to concentrate.

People: the team of people are very friendly and we tend to talk casually in the office and go to lunch as a group. Whenever I am stuck on something or need help with a task, they gladly help me learn and take me through some of the stuff. Social events are also great, e.g. weekly dodgeball tournament, pub drinks, pub quiz, etc.

Benefits: The company host multiple **events** throughout the week such as workshops that will help build performance e.g. confidence, excel training, positive influencing. I'm able to go to music events through the company. Plus, the location, zone 1, means I can travel easily.

How will your year in industry help your career progression?

Taking a year in industry has given me more time to think and learn about what I want to do after uni. I now have a **clearer vision of what career path I want to pursue**, and this happened thanks to working here, the experiences I've had and learning about the industry, about what my colleagues and managers do, as I had no idea what I wanted to do before taking the year out.

During this time **I've learnt so much, including the fundamental skills needed for a career in this field**, which I now hope to pursue. **I now have improved skills in excel, reporting, consolidation systems, analysis, communication, problem-solving**, etc. This will give me a head start in my career progression and now I feel more prepared for what I want to do after uni and the process to get there.