



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# IN FOCUS



PICTURE: LISA MINOGUE; LIBERATION IMAGES

## Internships have much to offer both student and host

Participants at The Social Studio, and Dr Grace McQuilten, inset below.

**GRACE McQUILTEN**  
**FOUNDER OF THE SOCIAL STUDIO.**  
**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S RESEARCH FELLOW, SCHOOL OF ART, RMIT UNIVERSITY.**  
PHD (ART HISTORY) AND BACHELOR OF CREATIVE ARTS (HONOURS) (THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE)



The Social Studio is a not-for-profit organisation that primarily supports newly arrived migrants and refugees by creating

pathways to training and employment. Fundamental to our mission is advocating for and creating awareness about the challenges humanitarian migrants face, as well as transforming public perceptions about settlement and migration through events and community initiatives.

There are a number of benefits to be realised through an internship program, not only for the intern but for the organisation as well. For us, participating in internship programs with Arts students is another form of advocacy, as well as creating an opportunity for dialogue and networking. Internships also provide a platform for an

exchange of ideas and opportunities to improve our operations. For example, internships allow both parties to establish new networks while providing the opportunity to learn from a “live” environment for interns, and improving workloads for the organisation due to the additional resources available.

The Social Studio strives to adopt interns into our general operating and team environment, as this is the best way to learn. The nature of our work, environment and relationships we have with students and staff stems from the inclusive atmosphere within the space – one where everyone feels at home.

My past experience, as an intern and host, reinforces two key points:

- You can learn an enormous amount by simply spending time in an organisation, being “a fly on the wall”.
- Internships are most successful when the organisation has the resources to supervise and support the intern.

The University of Melbourne interns we have hosted at the Studio have come on board with enthusiasm. They’ve developed great relationships, and have encouraged us to implement practices that have improved our performance.

If you would like to discuss hosting a Faculty of Arts intern at your organisation, please contact Charity Bramwell at [charityb@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:charityb@unimelb.edu.au) or on 8344 1764



**SOFIA SHANG**  
EXECUTIVE MASTER OF ARTS (2014).  
INTERN AT THE SOCIAL STUDIO, MELBOURNE.

My first few days at The Social Studio were a bit daunting. Transitioning from study to work as an intern was scary, largely due to my lack of work experience, but my colleagues were supportive, and I developed a much better understanding of my capacity.

There was no “regular day” at The Social Studio, so my tasks varied according to what needed to be done. Helping to prepare for the Spring Fashion Fundraising Gala Dinner was one of the highlights. In the lead-up to the event I took on the role of volunteer co-ordinator. On the day, I acted as an event manager, overseeing the whole event. This experience really gave me a taste of multi-tasking and taking on diverse responsibilities.

I made lasting connections with my colleagues at The Social Studio, and they have kept me informed about job opportunities in this sector.

My advice to interns is:

- Make a real connection with the people you work with.
- Be proactive, and challenge yourself.
- Ask for more responsibilities and tasks.
- Don't be afraid of unfamiliar roles.

Hosting an intern: what you need to know.

# Take care with legal guidelines

BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PARSHIA LEE-STECUM

**C**o-ordinators of internship programs must be mindful of the requirements of the Fair Work Act 2009 (FW Act). This legislation puts a number of safeguards in place to protect the rights of interns and prevent their exploitation as unpaid workers.

An important distinction is made in the legislation, and in the guidelines provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman, between an internship taken outside a course of study and one taken as part of an education or training course. The first of these is referred to in the FW Act and guidelines as an “unpaid internship”, whereas the latter is more properly called a “vocational placement”.

All internship and community volunteering subjects offered by the Faculty of Arts fall into the “vocational placement” category. The terminology commonly used for these subjects can lead to some confusion, since the subject titles typically employ the more recognisable term “Internship” (e.g. MULT30019 Arts Internship) rather than “Vocational Placement”. However, this should not obscure the fact that these subjects have been carefully designed to embed the workplace experience component as a “vocational placement” according to the terms of the FW Act.

A vocational placement can be “lawfully unpaid, regardless of whether an employment relationship exists or not” (Unpaid Work Fact Sheet, Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman 2014). The placement should be a part of the student’s learning experience in their course, and should assist them in developing and applying skills learnt in their course to the workplace. The overall aim of a vocational placement

should be to facilitate transition from study to work, which is referred to in the guidelines as increasing the “work readiness” of graduates.

In the Faculty of Arts, vocational placements are embedded in credit-bearing subjects (usually 12.5 points of credit) that carry specific requirements for the length of the placement (typically 80-100 hours for a 12.5-point subject). To ensure the learning aims of the placement are met, the work experience component is supported by a series of seminars that critically examine workplace issues, effective utilisation of course-based skills in the workplace, and the research surrounding these areas. Students complete written and oral assessment tasks that reflect upon, critique and articulate their experience during the placement. Feedback is provided at all stages by the academic co-ordinator(s) of each subject.

In addition to these academic structures and expectations, each placement is subject to a risk assessment process, and a formal agreement must be signed between the host organisation and the Faculty outlining the responsibilities of each party before the placement can commence.

The intent of these provisions is not simply to ensure that all parties meet the obligation under the FW Act that “the placement [be] done as a requirement of an education or training course” (Vocational Placements Fact Sheet, Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman 2014). The Faculty’s internship and community volunteering subjects are designed to support and enrich student learning within the course by providing a robust academic framework for work place experience.

#### USEFUL REFERENCES:

Fair Work Ombudsman website: [fairwork.gov.au/](http://fairwork.gov.au/)

Unpaid Work Fact Sheet, Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman 2014:

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/unpaid-work>

Vocational Placements Fact Sheet, Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman 2014:

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/student-placements>



**JASON TOH**  
EXECUTIVE MASTER  
OF ARTS (2014)

INTERN AT THE POLICY, ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH DIVISION OF THE FRED HOLLOWS FOUNDATION, MELBOURNE.

The scope and scale of work that I had expected to undertake for the internship doubled by the end of the first morning. A project proposal turned into a project management plan with a research report thrown in for good measure. As the specific area of work was new to me, extensive reading and consultation with staff helped me get familiarised with the subject matter.

My internship let me see firsthand the political nature of relationships between government departments and NGOs and how government influences the outcomes of development projects. I also enjoyed participating in engaging discussions with like-minded staff comparing industry practice with the current discourse in academic research.

While there were no employment opportunities available at the Foundation after the completion of my internship, I continued to work as a volunteer. I have met many people with whom I developed a rapport and who are now referees for future employment. These people have become my good friends, who have since offered access to their professional networks to aid me in finding a suitable career.



**HOLLY TAYLOR**  
MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS (2014)

INTERN AT THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR), THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA.

I have been with the OHCHR for five weeks, and in that time I have mostly worked on two key projects: the 2015 Human Rights Council Social Forum, and a panel discussion on climate change, in addition to some preliminary research on trade agreements in Africa, as part of a wider project on the human rights impacts of the proposed Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) for Africa.

There is no doubt that the biggest challenge associated with this internship is the fact that it is unpaid. I worked part-time while I was studying, and was lucky to have saved a substantial sum of money. Yet living in Geneva, one of the most expensive places in the world, and working without compensation is at times quite distressing. Knowing that I need to do this internship to improve my job prospects, but knowing there is a chance that if I don’t get a job in my chosen industry then I will have spent a large amount of money with no reward, is quite an odd feeling. I like to remind myself that even if I don’t get a job in this industry straight away, the experience and the development that I am gaining while I am here will be worth it in the long run. Following positive initial reviews from my supervisor, I believe that he will be happy to provide me with a strong reference at the end of this internship, which will hopefully open avenues for me in other organisations.



**BIANCA MONTEIRO**  
MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT  
STUDIES (2015)

INTERN AT THE ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE (SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR), MELBOURNE.

My internship was largely in a research capacity, conducting feasibility studies on potential new social enterprises. I worked on the initiation of the Food Justice Truck, a subsidised supermarket on wheels. It has since been greenlit, and should be piloted some time this year. After doing so much theory throughout university, it’s incredibly exciting to see tangible outcomes of your research that go beyond a good grade.

I think my internship grounded my degree for me. I was yearning for something more practical, and it definitely allowed me to apply the knowledge I had learned in a classroom to the “real world”.

My internship changed my perspective on development. I had often considered it from a humanitarian and social perspective, but it was only when I started working under Social Enterprise that I really appreciated development from an economic and business perspective. Prior to the internship, I think I valued education and social empowerment more as an approach to development, and while I still believe they are necessary elements, I realise now that they must be accompanied by economic empowerment and independence, for true sustainable development.

## Program spotlight: Melbourne School of Government MPA proves it’s never too late to learn as an intern

BY PROFESSOR  
JANINE O’FLYNN

**T**he Master of Public Administration (MPA) program is a unique cross-faculty initiative that caters exclusively to experienced professionals. MPA students undertake internships for many reasons; some are interested in trying a new career, others want to look at challenges they face from another perspective or in a different country. Internships offer a rare opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a new experience, enhancing their expertise, building networks and developing industry knowledge.

MPA interns have an incredible range of options both locally and globally. Even with significant industry experience, MPA students benefit from an internship by developing new skills and knowledge, honing their expertise and having the chance to meet leaders, decision-makers and mentors by connecting with peers in other work settings.

All of our internships are personalised experiences, so our MPA students become a great resource for the host organisation and have the chance to do something tailored to their needs. Our interns work with a senior mentor to carry out projects that allow them to extend their knowledge, challenge their ways of thinking, and make a difference more broadly in society.

## Celebrating 25 Years of the Parliamentary Internship program

**Did you complete an internship at the Victorian Parliament during your undergraduate degree?**

The Parliament of Victoria is proud to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Victorian Parliamentary Internship program next year. In order to celebrate this landmark achievement, the Parliament plans to host a special Anniversary Event in October 2015. For more information, visit [go.unimelb.edu.au/w8gn](http://go.unimelb.edu.au/w8gn)

## US sojourn begins in the deep end

CASSANDRA JOHNSTON

EXECUTIVE MASTERS OF ARTS (EMA) (2014)

INTERN AT THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, WASHINGTON DC.

In my first week at Portrait Gallery I was thrown in the deep end and asked to coordinate on-site production and technical support for a public presentation by the artist Jorge Rodriguez-Gerada. The topic of this presentation was his six-acre landscape portrait on the Washington Mall entitled *Out of Many, One*. This was a wonderful experience and an opportunity to use the skills I acquired from my EMA. Quality management, effective communication, creative and critical thinking were especially valuable skills that I drew on during my internship.

The biggest challenge associated with the internship was financing the trip. Fortunately, my internship co-ordinator provided wonderful advice and assisted me in applying for grants and scholarships. This assistance made my internship possible, and I am so grateful for the support and kindness shown to me by the University of Melbourne staff.



## A partnership for mutual benefit

BY INTERNSHIP CO-ORDINATOR DR CIANNON CAZALY

**I**nternships are a key part of the programs offered by the Faculty of Arts, giving our students the opportunity to apply their professional skills and high level specialist knowledge in a work environment.

Our host organisations are integral to the internship program and we work with partners in government, not-for-profit, corporate, commercial, arts and cultural organisations to provide the widest range of possible opportunities to our students, whatever their area of interest.

As an Internships Co-ordinator, I take very seriously the responsibility of matching the right student to the right host so that together they can create an internship project that will be of mutual benefit. As a result, the range of projects that have been undertaken by our students is staggering. From marketing plans or volunteer coordinator guides for major international festivals, to membership and sponsorship plans for charities and not-for-profit organisations or major reports

on government policy, Arts interns from the University of Melbourne can (and will) do it all.

Students from the Faculty of Arts are advanced critical thinkers with highly developed analytical skills and a broad range of knowledge. We find that the most fulfilling internship experiences (for both students and hosts) happen when students have the opportunity to observe the full range of activities, and contribute their new and different ways of thinking to their host organisation. When given the opportunity to put their knowledge and skills into practice, our students also make a substantive, lasting contribution to their host organisations.

## Audit experience concludes with a job offer

STEFANIA COLLA

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT (2016)

INTERN AT THE VICTORIAN AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE (VAGO), PERFORMANCE AUDIT BUSINESS AREA.

The Auditor-General is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament, appointed to examine the management of resources within the public sector on behalf of Parliament and Victorians. The University of Melbourne and staff at VAGO have built up a strong rapport over the years, resulting in a number of students undertaking internships at the office.

As an intern it's common to feel like you are stepping on people's toes. It can be difficult to find the right balance between ensuring your colleagues know you are enthusiastic and happy to help out, and not wanting to use up their time. Being new to the public sector was a little overwhelming! Fortunately, VAGO has developed a fantastic self-induction process for new interns, which helped me to familiarise myself with the office and the business area that I was going to be working in, all using the office Intranet and applications, which helped to expose me to VAGO systems and programs.

The focus of my internship was to conduct a meta-analysis of common themes arising out of recent VAGO audits. As a result, I spent most of my time reading, analysing information, and eventually writing a report. Receiving feedback on my report from my Director was definitely a highlight of the experience. I was really pleased to know that the work I had undertaken would be of use to VAGO, and it was also really beneficial to receive honest and constructive criticism that I could apply to my future work.

On the final day of my internship my Director encouraged me to let him know if I was looking for work. I jumped at the opportunity immediately, and I am now working full-time as an Analyst in Performance Audit.

### STAY IN TOUCH WITH FACULTY OF ARTS

EMAIL [arts-alumni@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:arts-alumni@unimelb.edu.au)

WEBSITE [arts.unimelb.edu.au/engage/alumni](http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/engage/alumni)

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