

### **An Internship in at Chatham House**

Michael White completed an events department internship with Chatham House towards the latter part of his Masters course in the War Studies Department of King's College, University of London .  
Jeff Riley, The Careers Group, University of London, October 2009

#### **Why do you think you were able to secure the internship ?**

I was 'over-prepared', which is a good thing and I was very enthusiastic about the position. In terms of preparation I knew the importance of the conference section to the organisation. Although it might not be the most 'glamorous' role, as particular research areas in Chatham House are highly sought after, Conferences is very important as it is where Chatham House depends on for profit, and also provides an excellent broad representation of what the institution is about. As a result I had done my research and knew about the recent events they had put on and the variety of such events. I had also been for a practice interview in the careers office. In the end the formal interview very quickly became an informal chat but then they sprang some tests on me covering grammar, reading and Excel (which I was a little rusty at ). We briefly discussed what I wanted to get from the position, what I expected and what interest in politics and world affairs I had. They then rang me later that day to offer me the position.

#### **What was the best thing about the experience ?**

- Taking advantage of being at the events and conferences. They have a very eclectic programme and as an intern you get to experience many of them
- It raised my level of knowledge which was interesting in itself but also helped with my studies. I got to hear high calibre speakers such as the Nato Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Schaffer, NATO Ambassador Ivo Daalder, and British Army Commander David Richards. I also managed to rub shoulders with senior journalists like Jon Snow, showing how the media rely on Chatham House. Frankly, you get to find out stuff before the media does.
- It was really good for my confidence as well. When I'm enrolling guest speakers phoning from Chatham House gets you through secretaries and receptionists and you can suddenly find yourself talking to some very senior people in the sector. Recently, for example, I have been writing to the Emir of Kuwait. I also spoke to former Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon on the phone. It made me feel very upwardly mobile! Also once you are established there you will get consulted by the permanent team for things like suggestions for speakers. I certainly didn't feel like an invisible presence.
- The work itself was fine. There was some routine stuff – database work, for example but they were really concerned to make sure this was balanced out with more interesting and challenging stuff. They also included me in every weekly team meeting where I was free to contribute some of my own ideas, and consulted as to how my progress on particular projects were going.
- Finally it was a good place to work. I had a good rapport with my colleagues and it was an enjoyable atmosphere. I didn't clear out on the dot at 5pm because I was enjoying what I was asked to do. I also managed to mingle and meet more senior people from other departments and in particular research areas a lunch time, and this was a good opportunity to get to know more about particular areas of the institution.

#### **What was the worst thing about the experience ?**

I can't really think of anything about the internship that wasn't a positive. Sure there is some routine work but this gets balanced out by other tasks in a fair way.