

ISS INTERNSHIP Q&A

With Thao

1. Why did we pick an NGO? What did we expect from this experience, given that this is a non-profit organisation?

I applied for a NGO internship because I wanted to pursue a career in international NGO media-communications and this is a very good opportunity to have hands-on experience and gain understanding about the role in reality.

Working in a non-profit organisation, I hoped to have a direct impact on the organisation's success, given we operate under a flat management system and every contribution is appreciated. Moreover, small-budgeted operations would make a challenging yet constructive environment for me to think outside of the box for smart and efficient solutions to the organisation's issues.

2. What is the actual experience?

I got a lot of hands-on experiences that make my toolbox so much fuller! As a media-com intern, I was able to get my hands dirty with designing and writing skills for communication pieces, helping out with the website reconstruction, seeing the difference between actually running a website compared to a blog or a social media page. Also, we had a chance to work with different people from not only different cultural background, but also their expertise gave me a valuable experience in terms of workplace diversity. And my internship experience was wrapped up with communication and media reports that required my observation and critical thinking to give out constructive recommendations for further improvements on the organisation's media-com system.

3. How do you find the culture in ISS? What is your favourite part of this internship?

The best thing about my internship was the highly supportive and diverse employees that I got to work with. As an intern, I received a great amount of support from the colleagues regarding organisational understanding. As an international intern, I also learned about the local and different working cultures at the same time through observing the ISSA staff's professional etiquettes, as well as their welcoming me as a member of the organisation. Having an internship in a country that is different from my original background also gave me a new perspective into workplace communications. Since many of the ISSA employees come from different countries, it was great to practice my English as it is the primary language for international NGO staff. In the end, this experience turned out to be a valuable learning curve to improve my cultural intelligence, a crucial skill in my pursuit of an international career.

4. What did we learn & gain?

During my internship, I was able to accomplish quite a range of experiences that enriched my understanding about organisation communications in general and the role of an in-house media-com person of an NGO in particular. Within the past three months, assisting ISSA's events, taking charge of the communication materials, working and receiving advice from a digital marketing producer to improve the digital tools and writing up a media-communication report were real projects that I got chances to participate in with actual impacts. I was also lucky enough to meet ISS staff from other locations within the Australian organisation network and knew about the impacts that we were doing for families and children. For the hands-on experiences that I have had, I would tell future interns to seize every internship opportunity for the experiences they provide, in order to be more well-equipped for professional, real-life workplaces.