

## Student Placement Profiles

### **Sonja Notley – August 2010 – May 2011**

My name is Sonja and I am about to graduate with a degree in Marine and Coastal Resource Management. For the past year I have been the intern at the Environment Office. This included working one day a week. Being at the office and 'behind the scenes' of the University has been a good experience. I have had a feel of what it really means to work nine till five in an office that is part of a large organisation.

From the very beginning I was busy with different projects that had been set for me. Some of these were exciting and some not so exciting! As time went on I started to work increasingly on my own independent projects. By far the most exciting project was organising the Hard Rain project to exhibit in Aberdeen with the assistance of the Climate Change Project. This was a great experience in events management, which has given me further thought into what I may want to do in the future.

Amy, Chris and John work at the office and have been my supervisors. They have the experience of working in the environmental sector in the 'real world' and I think I feel I have learnt a lot from them.

### **Charlotte Bishop - September - 2009 – May 2010**

Hello! My name is Charlotte. I've just completed a 4 year degree in International Relations and Anthropology (for my sins!) and spent the last year of the course balancing it with an amazing placement position in the Environment Office.

The deal was to work 8 hours a week on various projects (chosen by me) which would raise awareness to students and staff in the University about environmental issues as well as the work of the Environment Office. This involved chatting to students on campus about the Environment Office and environmental 'stuff', while putting up notices and posters. This formed a core part of the fun work. Alongside this I designed posters, located new advertising space, ordered merchandise, held specific events for national holidays ("Green for life not just for paddy's day", "Share the Love" on Valentine's Day...), worked on new advertising materials, worked with students in a yurt at Signposting Sustainability week....the list goes on!

Working in an office environment, while at the same time being given the scope to work apart from the office, allowed me to gain many skills in the areas of organisation, IT, marketing as well as bolstering my conversation and presentation skills.

Since then, I've been given numerous opportunities to continue on working in the environmental sector. Amy, John and Chris who work in the Environment Office have given me sound advice about interview and 'job-searching' techniques and tips and have pointed me in the right direction. After a gap year, the plan is to use the skills and experience that I gained this year, to keep working in 'grassroots' environmental organisations.

### **Helena Sramkova – December 2008 – May 2010**

Hello, my name is Helena and I think so far I have been the longest “surviving” student placement within the Environment Office. There is one important reason for this, and that is I found the working environment incredibly stimulating and learnt a lot about the University and how it works over. When I started I was keen, but had little understanding about environmental management and the difficulties in engaging the mainstream of our society with this issue.

My main role was to assist Mr John Kingsland, University Utilities Manager, with energy and water monitoring of the university buildings; mainly involving preparation of monthly energy consumption leaflets for each University building, which you can find on the Environment office website.

As I learned monitoring of something is just the kick-start for a change and consequently I had the opportunity to work alongside John when the power-management system was developed and implemented on selected University computers; as well as working on the new real time energy display, investigating the installation of smart meters, promoting the University Energy Performance Certificates and water saving technology in University toilets.

I agree, you probably have to be a “geek” to appreciate it these kind of things, but “geeks” rule and my reward was to prepare a base study on the use of renewable technology on Kings Campus for a new student hall at Hillhead.

In my last year at University I got the opportunity to apply what I learned within my role as AUSA Environment & Ethics Officer, by greening AUSA practices and running environmental campaigns.

All-in-all it was a great experience that I can recommend to anyone, the knowledge that I gained and the experience of working in such a professional environment was worth every moment.

#### **Carol-Ann Cunningham - August 2008 - May 2009**

My name is Carol-Ann Cunningham and I worked at the Environment Office from August 2008 to May 2009. I was in my final year of an MA Accounting degree and had long decided the business world was not for me. The placement role was so wide ranging in scope and responsibilities that it was a perfect introduction to the world of environmental management, particularly for a student who was changing fields. Whilst there I was responsible for various individual initiatives and although I was allowed much space to try my own ideas I always felt supported by the Environment Office team. Upon graduating I moved into a role in the National Union of Students (NUS) running a government funded carbon reduction project with students across England. In May 2010 I started a new role within NUS running various environmental projects for Students' Unions and Student Associations across the UK. It is without doubt that my placement at the Environment Office was a major factor in me being successful in these roles and I will never forget my time there.

#### **Julia Dunkerley – September 2007 – June 2008**

My name is Julia Dunkerley and I was welcomed into the Environment Office as a volunteer after the summer of 2007. I was studying Geography at the time and was inspired to help out after doing a placement on energy efficiency with the Business Environment Partnership. Duties as a volunteer included updating the notice boards around campus and coming up with new poster ideas etc. I didn't even have to make my colleagues cups of coffee which I was told (jokingly) would be one of my main duties in the office. I really enjoyed my role and being part of the office banter was a

welcome change to University life. After about a month of helping out in the office I was told my role was turning into a paid placement. Having enjoyed the job so much on a voluntary basis I didn't hesitate in applying for the job and was elated when I was offered the position.

As I was the first placement my thoughts were to do a survey across campus to gauge the levels of awareness of certain initiatives that were already in place. This was so we knew what needed to be publicised more in terms of awareness raising. To do this I donned my new 'able' hoodie and hit the streets in my quest to raise awareness throughout campus. It soon became apparent that students didn't know a lot in terms of the environment and their potential impact, and I was beginning to understand more of the challenges the Environment Office faced. One thing that became apparent was that many students were not even aware that the Environment Office existed, this led to more obvious signage being installed in the Hub and around campus. The survey also resulted in a report which highlighted what areas needed attention and would act as a guide for future placements.

In the summer of 2008 I graduated and it was time to turn in my able hoodie (which I thought I was getting to keep) and move on to new challenges. I'm currently working for a charity whose main focus is to alleviate fuel poverty in and around Aberdeen and to promote energy awareness. I have no doubt in my mind that the nature of this placement stood me in perfect stead to get the job I am in today, which I love. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to get a step ahead and learn a bit about the challenges that we and the environment face before leaving the comfort of student loans and happy hour!