

# Industrial Orientation (Overseas) in Shanghai, China



As many of the year three Civil Engineering students proceed on to their second semester, the niggling matter that gives us a real headache lies with making a decision about our attachment. For those who do not know, engineering students have a choice in fulfilling our attachment by either industrial attachment or industrial orientation. The former requires the student to take up an internship at a company for 22 weeks fulfilling 10 Academic Units (AU), while the latter requires the student to take up an internship for 10 weeks fulfilling 4 AUs, but is required to attend lessons in semester two and take up six additional AUs of Unrestricted Electives.

For myself, I decided to take up industrial orientation, as it would give me more flexibility to complete more year four modules during my semester two of year three as well as more Unrestricted Electives, which I am interested in. This way I can also focus better for my Final Year Project which stands for 10 AUs. Also, I will be working during my three-month break and the attachment will keep me constructively occupied.

While many students relied on the school to find them an internship, my friend Kah Leong and I turned to a company STA Travel, which frequently helps NTU students who go overseas for internships look for accommodation, for help. Not only did they find us more than one internship offer, they also helped to find accommodation which is near to our workplace. They also did a wonderful job to ensure we were well taken care of and even have a sister company in China, assigned us a guardian whom we can contact in emergencies. We eventually settled for Shanghai Humin Architectural Design Co. Ltd in Shanghai, China.

As we are both civil engineers, we had been assigned to the department of structures which comprises of top-class engineers who were from very prestigious universities and some were accorded the national first level certified structural engineer title. The company is also certified as a first level company in design. This means that the company is allowed to handle mega projects such as skyscrapers but not excluding smaller minor projects as well. During my stay, I had the chance to learn from the best, the intricacies of structural design albeit in a different code from Singapore. We were each assigned a mentor who guided us on the basics of design work. I was introduced to China's most widely used programme, the PKPM

(no full words) for structural design work and use what I have learnt in school, such as using Autocad for construction drawings. I also had the opportunity to work on a real life small scale project and had to work with people from the architectural department. Such opportunities are likened to simulating the actual working conditions of a structural engineer. Also I had the chance to participate in the tendering for projects where some of the presentations were required immediately and I even had to work overnight for it, just like the real work place. All in all, it was a fantastic experience for me and I enjoyed the work atmosphere in the office as well as the people. The company took really good care of our well-being.

Besides the work of course was the chance for me to go travelling, places where I've never been before. As the World Expo coincided with my internship period, I managed to join in on the buzz as well. Our colleagues also brought us to places of interest in Shanghai too, and recommended us some local dishes.

Staying and working in a foreign land enable one to understand the country's history better, its culture, its people and their way of life. Mingling with the locals also gave me a better insight into the minds of the people, how they feel and think about all matters under the sun, which I can compare and contrast to my own. Also, I learnt to be even more independent and adaptable since life is very different in China as compared to Singapore.

In conclusion, this internship had been very fulfilling for me career-wise, academically and on a personal level, very rewarding as well. I hope my article can inspire more students to take up their internships in places outside their comfort zone and learn more about the world.

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