

ALICE DUNNE

**UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENT STUDENT
TO PART-TIME HR ADMINISTRATOR**



In this interview, Alice shares below her experience from undertaking a 12-month placement as an Undergraduate Placement Student, to continuing on a part-time basis whilst completing her final year of her university degree.

What attracted you to a one-year placement with Centerprise and what did the role entail?

Being enrolled on a Human Resource Management degree meant I was really keen on gaining relevant experience before graduating, aiming to learn where my skills lied and which areas of HRM I was most interested in, and therefore I decided to look for a placement year. The HR Undergraduate placement with Centerprise International was a generalist role and so offered a comprehensive exposure to different areas of HR, with the role being centred around data entry, report making and calendar management. However, a key part of my interest in the role was the potential to be involved with additional HR projects and also immersing myself in a strong company culture which encourages knowledge-sharing and support throughout its staff.

How did your knowledge, skills and disciplines you developed in your placement help you in your final year of study?

The key skills I've developed through my time at Centerprise involve managing my workload, being diligent and thorough in my tasks, and being a clear communicator. I know that these will be beneficial in any role I take going forward but I am also so grateful for my improved understanding of how to be an effective HR professional, particularly being consistent and reliable, whilst also being understanding of all individual's differences and perspectives. This approach is something which is not easily taught in a degree, and I found that in my final year, I was able to apply real scenarios and solutions to my assignments, and this ultimately led to me achieving a first class, and the highest overall degree in the department.

The additional benefit of doing a placement is that you can decide which areas you do and don't like. Prior to my placement, I had discounted pursuing recruitment as I didn't think I would enjoy it and perceived it to be too competitive and restrictive.

Nevertheless, I agreed to get involved with recruitment on my placement year and found that the process of guiding candidates through a recruitment process, creating and conducting interviews, and then successfully onboarding new employees, was extremely rewarding and enjoyable. This meant that upon my search for a role for after my graduation, I then included recruitment roles and have secured a competitive Recruitment Coordinator role in London following my degree. Without my placement experience, I doubt I would have considered this role and so am grateful that I was given the opportunity to try such things out as a student, and be able to continue within a similar industry post-graduation.

What have you learned at Centerprise that has stuck with you the most?

One of the biggest takeaways from my time at Centerprise is that being friendly and building relationships with staff at all levels can really help to establish yourself in a company, and succeed. Particular tasks such as induction planning and managing annual leave required me to communicate with all staff members and through this, I was able to build good working relationships and become a reliable member of the HR team that staff could go to. I think this was also a large part of why I could continue in a part-time capacity, whilst also being remote, as I could maintain them more easily even when I wasn't present in the office.

What was your greatest achievement from your time at Centerprise?

I think my greatest achievement would be being nominated through the peer recognition scheme for demonstrating the company's core values. I knew I was a hard-worker and that I was progressing well in my role, but seeing that this impact was being felt directly by employees was really rewarding and encouraged me to continue the same way for the remainder of my placement and during my part-time work.

What was your favourite part and the most challenging aspect of your placement at Centerprise?

My favourite part of the placement was refining the core tasks of my role to a high standard, and building trust within the team, which after a few months then allowed me to join on additional projects. I was involved in company mergers, departmental meetings and helped to recruit the next cohort of undergraduates, and all these helped broaden my exposure to HR tasks, in addition to developing my understanding of business and the IT sector overall. Though this additional responsibility is what made my placement year so rewarding, managing my own recruitment in particular was initially a challenge, as it required me to have strong prioritisation, time management and stakeholder management skills, which I had to quickly adapt to in order to maintain the rest of my role. Looking back at this, I am now much more confident in managing a heavy workload successfully, which I would not have gained going into work without a placement.

How does working in a full-time role compare to your expectations prior to commencing your placement?

Prior to my placement I had only completed part-time retail work alongside my studies, so going into a full-time office position initially seemed daunting, however I thoroughly enjoyed having a more stable routine and finding a balance between my work and home-life. Though my role also began during the pandemic, my in-role training and guidance from my team meant adapting to an office environment went much more smoothly than anticipated and I am much more prepared going into this environment again in future. Experiencing this type of work as a student also does come with a level of understanding from staff, and I found that other employees were always willing to help or give advice if you needed anything or had any questions.

What advice would you give to an undergraduate joining the business in a similar role, especially someone new to the IT industry?

At Centerprise, its biggest asset is its employees, in that you can build connections with anyone in the company regardless of your role. The teams are really keen to get students involved, so if you show interest and are capable in the role you have been set, then there is real scope to go far during your placement year. Many students only consider larger, well-known companies for their work experience, however the ability to speak to anyone in the company about their career and advice is something that is special and unique about Centerprise International.

The IT industry is also constantly growing and adapting, and so being at the forefront of new technologies and systems is really exciting to see so early on in our working life, and opens up many more types of opportunities after finishing education.

How would you summarise your time at Centerprise International, from a personal and professional level?

My 2 years at Centerprise International has provided me with an abundance of experience that will be useful in both my professional and personal life. As a person, I am much more confident in my abilities and know that my work ethic and attitude are some of my strongest characteristics at work. Furthermore, working away from home provided me with a new level of independence outside of being a university student, before I go into further work. Professionally, as a new graduate, I can now go into my new role knowing that I have a great foundation of HR knowledge, a wealth of experience to utilise alongside that from my degree, and a supportive network of IT and HR professionals.