

Allen & Overy

Company background

Allen & Overy is a leading international law firm with a network of offices in 28 cities worldwide.

Total number of employees

5,100 globally, 2,000 of which work in the UK

Operational countries

The company operates in 20 different countries across Asia, Europe, the United States and the Middle East.

The challenge

Often work experience is marred with images of tea-making and filing, but this is not the case with modern work experience programmes. Employers today face the challenge of implementing and maintaining a quality programme that benefits both the company and the individual. Structured programmes can enable companies to complete projects, recruit new employees and allow the student invaluable workplace experience.

Project name

Work experience programme

Project manager

Zoe Gordon, Graduate Recruitment Manager

Length of scheme

Allen & Overy have been offering work experience programmes for over 20 years. The current programme offers placements of 10 days and 3 weeks depending on the students' requirements and preference.

Work-experience programme structure

- Students can apply for the programme online. If their application is successful they will go through to the interview process which comprises of two one-to-one interviews, the second of which comprises a business case study.
- Depending on which programme the student has applied for, successful applicants will then be placed on either a 10 day programme taking place in the winter or spring break, or a longer 3 week programme which takes place in the summer break.
- The placement itself takes the form of practical work experience, with students working alongside a qualified solicitor to get an idea of what is involved in the day-to-day tasks at the firm, as well as working on small projects.
- In addition they take part in workshops, seminars and talks that familiarise them with both the company and the work that would be involved if they join the firm. This allows students to get a better idea of whether Law is the career for them, whilst also giving an insight into Allen & Overy as a company.

The benefits

- The work experience programme allows Allen & Overy the chance to recruit graduates for its Training Contract.
- Following the work experience placement, candidates are offered the opportunity to have a one-to-one interview with a partner for a training contract with the company.
- This means that Allen & Overy are able to take on graduates whom they are already familiar with and whose capabilities have impressed them.
- In terms of benefits to the student, they are given the opportunity to experience first hand what a career in Law entails so that they can develop the skills required, and seek advice from experts in the field.
- They are also given extensive feedback on their time with Allen & Overy so that they can further develop the necessary skills once the work experience programme is complete.

Results

- Following the 2007 Winter Programme, over 90% of work experience students were offered the training contract and 100% accepted this offer, a testament to the merits of Allen & Overy's work experience programme.
- Allen & Overy are finalists in the 'Over 250 Employees - Up to 3 Months' category at the 2008 NCWE Awards.

Lessons

- All students who take part in the work experience programme complete an online questionnaire. This allows Allen & Overy to make alterations to the programme on the advice of people who have actually taken part in it.
- In particular the company has learnt that it is important to give the same induction process to all placement students, regardless for the length of their placement, to ensure they are familiar with the company and what is expected of them.
- It is also important that the lawyers who are mentoring the students are properly briefed on what Allen & Overy, as a company, want to achieve from the work experience placements.

Future plans

- Allen & Overy will continue to review the programme based on the feedback from student questionnaires.
- The inclusion of a 10-day spring work experience programme is new in 2008, allowing for 20 more placement students, raising the number of work experience placements offered by Allen & Overy to 120.

Key tips

1. Be clear about the objectives of running a work experience programme from a business perspective.
2. Find out what your competitors are offering and how they go about attracting candidates for their programme(s).
3. Research your target audience - what are they looking for from a successful work experience programme? Is there anything you can offer that will differentiate your company?