



# THE JOURNEY TO A SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Some of our readers working in investment banking may remember their summer internships. This two-month program is still a must for HEC graduates looking to join top-notch financial institutions. We interviewed a few HEC students and graduates about what this challenging and rewarding experience meant to them.

Summer has come. The sun is shining, business is slowing down and most students are thinking about their upcoming holidays. Meanwhile, some HEC students are beginning an extremely challenging 10-week program in London, New York or Hong Kong. The so-called “summer internship” is a real springboard toward careers in big investment banks like Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley or J.P. Morgan. “*Most junior investment bankers that are recruited in London have already completed a summer internship*,” says **Henri Ceddaha (H.19)**, an HEC student who is about to begin his own internship. So much is at stake.

Getting a summer internship is a long journey that requires patience and tenacity. HEC students usually do their “summer” just after their gap year, while masters candidates do it after their 10-month MSc year. All candidates start preparing for the selection process a year in advance! Indeed, the hiring season for summer 2019 internships will begin in September 2018. “*There is a lot of homework involved, but first and foremost, networking is crucial*,” emphasizes **Ferdinand Petra (MBA.02)**, associate professor of finance at HEC Paris.

## GETTING ON THE FAST TRACK

The best way for current HEC students to learn about the summer-internship selection process is to contact HEC students and graduates who applied for summer internships in previous years to get their feedback, whether or not their applications were successful. “*I set up a few phone interviews of approximately 20 minutes each and I got valuable information about the process. Students are often reluctant to network because they fear being intrusive, but they definitely should take the leap*,” says **Samuel Chekroun (H.18)**, who completed a summer internship at Goldman Sachs last year. Candidates that demonstrate their motivation can benefit from a “fast track”, which means that they will sit for interviews before others. Surprising as it may seem, technical knowledge is not the main criterion for being chosen for a summer internship. Prospective interns are often asked tricky questions designed to reveal their personalities, such as “Have you ever had the opportunity to get something but did not take it since somebody else needed it more than you did?” When asked about his or her skills, the candidate

should use the STAR method: Present the situation, the task involved, the action performed and the result.

Banks are coming up with other innovative ways to interview candidates. Goldman Sachs and some competitors are now using a digital interviewing tool called HireVue that asks candidates questions randomly, films the answers, and analyzes the way the candidate behaves. “You have 30 seconds to prepare and 90 seconds to answer, with no second chance. You have to be concise, clear and relaxed,” **Henri Ceddaha** explains. “For me, it was the most challenging part of the process.”

If a candidate gets through the initial online stage, the next step is an interview at an assessment center in London, Paris or another city. A jury tests the candidate's behavior and knowledge of finance or accounting by asking questions like “A company has just bought a computer for 500 euros; what is the impact of this on the company's P&L, balance sheet and cash-flow statements?” The candidate cannot afford to fail at these exercises, which at least are within reach for second-year HEC students. Personality and motivation are nevertheless the most important factors in the selection process. To help candidates perform well, **Ferdinand Petra** has put together a database of 7,000+ interview questions. Every HEC student can take a look at the questions that other candidates were asked the previous year, and also contact other students who have had the same interview as recently as two days before.

## “SCARY AND REWARDING”

Getting a summer internship is a challenge, and completing it is no piece of cake, either. Interns must be able to work from 9 AM to 2 AM, at least five days a week. The junior banker must also adapt to the peaks and valleys of a company's workload, with huge differences of pressure. “When there is a deal opportunity, you have less time and you need to be at your best,” sums up **Helena Badia Serra (H.17)**, from Barcelona, who did her summer internship last year in Goldman Sachs' private-equity division. She says, “During the 10 weeks of my internship, I was given more and more responsibilities, like doing a



The HEC MSc International Finance students during the highly awaited London Study Trip

## SIX TIPS FOR A STUDENT SEEKING A SUMMER INTERNSHIP

- **Read business news every day**, such as in the Financial Times and/or The Wall Street Journal.
- **Contact HEC graduates** who have already completed a summer internship to get their insights. Personalize your questions. Ask them about their experience, the industry they were involved in and the deals they worked on. “Junior bankers are often the ones that analyze and sort out resumes,” Samuel Chekroun (H.18) notes.
- **Look at the special characteristics of the bank** where you are applying for an internship. Take some time to learn about the values of the company. This can be very important for institutions like Goldman Sachs.
- **Prepare answers to the technical questions** you are likely to get, such as accretion-dilution exercises. Get materials from students who completed their internships the previous year, and attend investment-banking courses or take electives in M1 at HEC.
- **Network, network, network.** Take part in any event involving investment banking on the HEC campus and, if possible, beyond HEC.
- Once you have an offer of an internship, attend **Ferdinand Petra's** presentation “How to Convert your Summer Internship into a Full-Time Job”.

*financial model on my own. I had to keep up with expectations, which was both scary and extremely rewarding.”*

Working in top-notch investment banks indeed implies meeting high standards but also the chance of getting big returns. “Since I added the Goldman Sachs reference to my resume, head-hunters have been contacting me much more often. Even during my summer internship, I was receiving offers from international banks and investment funds,” explains **Samuel Chekroun**. The French graduate completed a six-month internship at Lazard and another one at the Advent International fund before his summer internship. “At Goldman I could work on much bigger deals, often exceeding 1 billion dollars, with more international exposure”, he adds.

A successful summer internship paves the way to a full-time job right after graduation. The chances of getting such a job are even greater if the student spends time networking during the internship. Approaching employees in other divisions of the company helps broaden the candidate's opportunities, as **Angelina Kostyrina (MS.17)** experienced last summer at J.P. Morgan, where she worked with the credit derivative team. “It is critical to show that you are passionate and to make sure people will remember you,” she emphasizes. “Even if it is not in my Russian culture, I approached traders and sellers from other teams and set up times for us to have a coffee together. I tried to ask smart questions and demonstrate some knowledge,” she adds.

People love that you care about them, and investment bankers are no exception. ●