



Shinshiro City Council hosted a welcome party for Chris shortly after he arrived at OSG. Former Mayor of Shinshiro, members of the International Team at Shinshiro City Council, Shinshiro International Exchange Association and OSG staff attended.

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‘Once in a lifetime’ placement linked the North East with the Far East

An engineering graduate from Northumbria University has shared his experience of completing a dream international work placement in collaboration with a network linking cities around the world which share the name ‘Newcastle’.

Chris Brownhill has credited his time in Shinshiro – which translates as ‘New Castle’ – in Japan, with helping to develop both his personal and professional

skills beyond all expectations.

Mechanical Engineering BEng (Hons) graduate, Christopher Brownhill, swapped Newcastle upon Tyne for a year-long placement in the city of Shinshiro – which translates as ‘New Castle’ – in Japan.

His year-long placement at the Japanese tool cutting manufacturing company [OSG](#) came about thanks to the [Newcastles of the World](#) initiative, which aims to create opportunities for education, tourism, business and culture by bringing together people from 17 towns and cities around the world whose name translates as ‘Newcastle’ or ‘New Castle’. The Newcastle of the World Secretariat, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, coordinates and develops projects in partnership with the other ‘Newcastles’.

Chris’s experience has now been developed into a case study by the Newcastles of the World Secretariat for other organisations to learn from.

Having wanted to visit Japan for as long as he can remember, the placement which finished in August 2020 was a dream come true for Chris, who immersed himself in Japanese culture and learning as much as he could during the year – despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Secretariat and Chris agreed to create a case study once he had graduated.

“The placement was an amazing challenge, a once in a lifetime chance of gaining new experiences and learning new skills, through working in Japan,” explained Chris, who focused on learning the process of tool design and programming with support from the OSG team.

“I produced tools I had designed, modelled and simulated myself. I learnt about how adaptive the work I made had to be as there are many changes made during the production process to produce the best possible results. This led me to finding certain parts of the work that were taking up a lot of time but were very simple to do. I made my first programme in response to this which then cut hours of working time each week.”

Chris, who graduated last summer with a First Class Honours degree in Mechanical Engineering and has been developing prototypes in preparation for the launch of his own gaming company, was the first student to secure a placement through Newcastles of the World. He has plans to move to the Netherlands within the next five years to pursue a career in engineering in

relation to game development theory and the interaction between humans and machines. It is hoped further international opportunities for work and study will follow for future Northumbria students.

Chris added: “I feel the placement opened doors for me, from working in engineering to using the range of personal skills I developed. It furthered my University studies, giving a jump start to my career.”

To make the placement possible, the Newcastle of the World Secretariat worked with Daiki Nakamura, the Marketing Manager at OSG and Ryoji Hozumi the former Mayor of Shinshiro and his international team, as well as Northumbria University staff.

OSG Supervisor Oji Kawaguchi, Chris Brownhill and OSG Marketing Manager, Daiki Nakamura sit down for a training session.

Zélie Guérin, Newcastle of the World Project Director, said: “We benefitted from online communications with Chris. On his final day at OSG we had a farewell link-up. Chris gave an excellent presentation, speaking first in Japanese, then in English, telling us about his placement, how much he had enjoyed it, the opportunities, experiences and skills development it brought. For many years, it has been Chris’s dream to live and work in Japan. His curiosity, drive and proactive approach combined to achieve this goal. Helping to shape his future, it is tremendous that the work placement has provided Chris with a firm foundation to enter the competitive world of work at a global level.”

Victor Ottaway, Head of Placements and Internships at Northumbria University said: “A placement year in industry is an invaluable experience. It allows students the opportunity to develop new technical skills, make connections, apply theoretical knowledge in the real world and gain first-hand experience of the recruitment and selection process. At Northumbria University, we fully recognise the employability benefits and would welcome placement opportunities from other Newcastle around the world.”

Northumbria has forged strong links with a wide range of local and international organisations in order to provide students with the best placement opportunities available. More information is available online at northumbria.ac.uk

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