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# Support for SMEs and students through Northumbria paid internship scheme

**Businesses working in the creative and cultural sectors have been among the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, with many smaller organisations facing a massive loss of revenue.**

The impact of the pandemic is also being felt by students and recent graduates, with paid employment and work placement opportunities severely limited by the impact of the virus on businesses.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak recently highlighted the importance of supporting young people into work placements with the announcement of his new Kickstart programme, and at Northumbria University this type of help is already being provided through the [Northumbria Santander Universities Internships Scheme](#).

The aim of the initiative is to boost the employability of current students and recent graduates by giving them the opportunity to gain real world paid experience.

The scheme also benefits SMEs by providing access to students' skills and experiences at no cost, with the two-week internships paid for by Northumbria University through funding from Santander Universities.

At a time when many creative businesses are looking for support through the Covid-19 crisis, this additional help and free expertise could make a big difference.

Head of Placements and Internships at Northumbria University Victor Ottaway said: "Evidence shows the more work experience upon graduation a student has, the more likely they are to be appointed to a graduate level role.

“However, we know finding a paid internship at the moment is not easy for students which is why we’re delighted to be able to offer this scheme through our partnership with Santander Universities.

“The scheme is particularly beneficial for SMEs within the vulnerable creative sector and we have already seen a number of successful placements by students from our arts and design programmes.”

One such example is Animation graduate Nela Angelova, who last year spent eight-weeks working as an animator on a graduate internship with Concision, a creative agency based in Durham.

Eighteen months later she is still working for the same organisation on a permanent contract, progressing from a Junior Animator to Head of Animation for the agency’s sister company Parent Scheme.

Nela, who graduated from [Northumbria’s Animation MA](#) in December 2018, said the internship scheme could open doors for students and graduates, giving them vital experience, which could lead to future employment.

She explains: “The internship gave me the opportunity to work in a professional environment, at a time when many employers wouldn’t consider taking me because I was a new graduate. The internship scheme is unique and there is nothing else out there that will help you get your feet through the professional doors so quickly. Without doubt this is a great opportunity from which both employers, graduates and students can benefit.”

Northumbria University is now inviting businesses who may be interested in employing an intern through the scheme between now and the end of September to get in touch. In particular, SMEs working in the creative and cultural sectors are encouraged to apply.

Internships last for two weeks, during which time the student or graduate is paid £9 per hour by the company they are recruited by, up to a maximum of £630 for the two weeks (based on 35 hours per week at £9 per hour). This is then paid back to the business at the end of the internship by Northumbria University.

Employers must be SMEs with 250 employees or less, an annual turnover of under £50 million and registered in the UK. The employer must be willing to make the intern an employee of the company for the duration of the internship, including issuing them with a written contract of employment and paying them with a payslip.

Northumbria students from any year group can apply for internship positions, along with those who have graduated in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

To discuss the internship scheme in more detail please contact our Internships team on [sv.employers@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:sv.employers@northumbria.ac.uk)

Northumbria University has been working in partnership with Santander since 2015, during which time the international banking group has committed almost half a million pounds to Northumbria, funding student internships, work placements, overseas study and scholarship.

It has also donated £100,000 for a new enterprise incubator being developed at Northumbria to support student start-ups, academic spin-outs and graduate enterprise.

Santander has a long-term strategic alliance with the higher education sector, and a focus on entrepreneurship, enterprise and education.

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