

IE3 Global Internship: Journalism & Communications in Ireland - Fall 2022

Required Questions

1. What was your first day in your host country like? What about your first day at the internship site? Did your pre-departure expectations match the reality?

My first day in Ireland, I mainly spent the day getting everything moved into my new home, adjusting to the time change, and figuring out where everything was that I needed to know. When my flight landed it was the early afternoon, and the first thing I did was catch a bus at the airport that took me from Dublin into Dalkey, which is the town that I lived in and where my host site office is situated as well. Dalkey is not far outside the city at all, so I was able to get to my new home pretty quickly and get everything moved in. Throughout my entire time in Ireland, I rented a room out of a family home in the town of Dalkey, so on my first day I got to meet the family that lived there, introduce myself, and get my things moved in. The rest of the day I spent walking around the town and finding where everything was that I needed to know. Dalkey is a coastal town, so I spent some time walking along the water and saw a few nice ports, swimming areas, and got to look out on Dalkey Island across the water. I then walked through the village center and looked at all the shops and restaurants around the town. Finally, I found where the train station was, bought myself a re-usable and re-fillable card for the train, and I also found my host site office so that I would know exactly where to go on the first day of my internship. I would say that, overall, I had a relatively simple and easy time with navigating my flights and finding my way to my new home my first day in Ireland.

When I officially began working at my internship, I had a few days that were a little touch-and-go to get started on work, but eventually people from the company started giving me projects and were very helpful and kind navigating me through them. One thing that I didn't completely expect or understand before getting to my internship was that the company I worked with is still working from home in great part. There is a very nice office space in the center of Dalkey village for my host site, but ever since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, most of the employees at the company are still choosing to do their work from home and the office space often goes unoccupied. It is my understanding that many of the employees were commuting far distances to get to the office pre-pandemic, and they are simply finding that they would like to continue to work from home given that they have the choice. So, given all this, I found that my internship ended up being a lot more independent than I expected it to be, and most of my communication with my co-workers and superiors was through apps like Slack, Zoom, and Email. I did not mind this in the end, and it was actually quite nice at times when I got used to it, but the first few days of my internship were a bit hard to adjust and figure out what my role exactly was at the company and what work to start on. After a few days, however, one of my bosses at the company named Garret got me set up with everything I needed and met with me in person to go over everything. At this point I was given a set of keys to the office and had all the passwords and applications I needed to be tied in with everyone at the company. After this, I was able to use the office space whenever I wanted, and I had good and clear communication with

everyone at the company. I was also set up with my first project at this point and was given specific individuals to contact with any questions about my first assignment.

2. How did your impressions of the host culture and internship site change over time? What are some of the biggest differences you encountered?

In terms of the cultural aspect of my abroad experience, I would say that over time my impressions did change simply in the sense that the more time I spent in Ireland the more I grew to understand it. When I first arrived in Ireland, I truthfully didn't know a lot about the culture, the history, or what I would really be stepping into in terms of differences between the U.S. and this country. On the days I wasn't working at my internship, I really tried to travel around Ireland as much as possible, as well as go to museums, and experience different things in Dublin if I wasn't going anywhere outside the city. Doing these types of things is what really taught me about the place I was living in, and these were the times when I felt the most connected to the experience and also felt like I was growing the most as my own person. These experiences gave me a really deep education on the history of Ireland, and additionally, how this history in large part has come to shape the way of life and the outlook of Irish people and communities. Also doing fun and simple things like going to pubs, events, concerts, and taking tour busses to other parts of the island helped me meet all kinds of different people and learn about their culture and way of life. I learned that, overall, Irish people tend to be very joyful and are also quite intellectual people. They laugh a lot and are very willing to laugh at themselves. I also found that a lot of Irish people tend to find a lot more humor and happiness in the mundane parts of life compared to Americans, and they really love to celebrate and do things in communities. Additionally, because of how much of Irish history has been spent fighting for independence from the U.K., I learned that a lot of Irish people take a lot of pride in their country's independence and individual religions and culture. These were all things I found to be neat, and which I thought were quite distinct and different from American culture and general attitude of life.

Living so close to Dublin city center, I had a lot of time to see what city life is like and experience this in a way I never had before. I tried to immerse myself in the celebratory nature that Dubliners have, and I also got to see its amazing night life for myself and experience this. On the other hand, I also got to take trips to all kinds of other places in Ireland, even some that were so rural that I only heard people speaking Gaelic rather than English. Some of the other areas I got to travel to included Cork, Galway, Dingle, and Killarney. I also drove the Ring of Kerry, kissed the Blarney Stone, and even got to go up to Northern Ireland to see Belfast and the Giant's Causeway. All these travels and experiences taught me a lot about the varying culture of Ireland. Each place I went to and each person I talked to taught me a new aspect about the history or culture and helped grow my impression and understanding of this place.

Looking at my impressions of my internship and how this changed over time, I would give a similar response simply in the sense that the more I worked there and the more co-workers I connected with, the more I grew to understand the company and see what it really is that they do. Showing up to my internship, I had a baseline understanding of what it is that host site does, because I had met with the two heads of the company via zoom before coming to Ireland. In short, I knew the company wrote travel articles and created a variety of media content for

different companies. I knew I would be working with writing and content creation, but I did not know which companies in particular this would be for, and I also didn't know exactly what this work was going to look like or what I would specifically be doing myself to help the company. The longer I worked for host site the more I understood about the scope of work they do. I learned that the office has different people who specialize in different areas and have individual tasks they repetitively work on for the company. For example, there is one person who is in charge of video recording and photography, one person who works on editing the articles before publishing, etc. I also learned about all the different companies that my host site works with and produces articles and content for. I learned that the main company they work with directly is Travel Ireland, and that many of the employees work solely on creating photo and video content and writing articles for them which go onto Ireland.com. A lot of the intern projects I ended up working on during my time with this company included filing and organizing spreadsheets which dealt with Ireland.com articles and content. I also got to work on a project which was my focus for several weeks straight, and this was to format and upload the press releases for this same company, Travel Ireland. Apart from this company, however, I also got to learn about some of the other businesses that my host site works for and see the type of content they create for them as well. I gradually also learned more and more about my co-workers and superiors themselves, got to see their work style and some examples of their work, and learn how to best communicate with them and learn from them.

3. Considering the entire experience, what were the most important benefits of your internship - personally and professionally?

I would say that looking back on this experience now, I am immensely grateful for the things this opportunity gave me, and I know this experience has helped me to grow in numerous ways in my life. A lot of the things I learned in my time here are things I know are going to stick with me, and things I will carry throughout my life moving forward.

In terms of my personal life, living in Ireland really helped me grow and gain a lot of independence in many ways. During the first few weeks of my time in Ireland, I had some difficulty adjusting to my new life at first, because I found myself getting really lonely and feeling so far away from everyone I knew and loved. But with time, I sort of just learned to be more comfortable doing things by myself, and I really learned to embrace this independent way of living day-to-day. I got comfortable going places on my own, eating alone in restaurants, going to pubs alone, and all kinds of other things. Because I was more-or-less living by myself and didn't have many people my age around me, I was almost always on my own, but with time I actually began to really love this. I also found I had more time to do things like read (especially picked up some great Irish literature), listen to music, and just really appreciate my surroundings being by myself. Finally, this experience also helped me gain a lot of confidence in my ability to travel solo and it taught me how to navigate planning trips on my own. After the final day of my internship, I actually ended up taking a flight to Paris and gave myself a week to explore some other countries before flying back home. In this time, I was able to go to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and from there took a direct flight from Amsterdam back home to Portland. Pushing myself to do this also helped me gain further confidence in my ability to travel and it taught me how to get around in countries where you don't speak the language. Now that I am back home and have finished this experience and chapter of my life, I feel a lot more confident in

my ability to navigate my own life, to travel, and to really rely on myself in ways I wasn't confident about doing before. I feel that I know my strengths a lot better now in ways I previously didn't.

When it comes to the professional aspect of this experience, I also feel my internship enriched me in many ways. I learned a lot of the things that I could end up doing with my degree after college (if I choose to go the media route), and I gained a lot of valuable experience in the workplace. I learned how to work with others in an office setting, as well as how to be really willing to be patient, take things slow, and truly take the time to learn from others. I also learned how to navigate a lot of software and applications in a depth I didn't before. I ended up using a lot of digital spreadsheets on excel and google docs, and I had to learn how to navigate some slightly chaotic folders on google docs and drive. I got to learn a lot about how to organize (and re-organize) things in these types of applications, and how to organize things so they are concise, clear, and so that they can better help other individuals working at a company. Additionally, I also learned how to publish press releases and how to concisely organize and format articles for websites. This was a skill I didn't have any previous experience doing in any capacity, and during my time at my host site I learned a lot about how to make text, images, and articles appealing to people and really catch their eye. When it comes to writing travel articles, and travel journalism specifically, I feel I've really taken away a good basis of knowledge on how this type of writing is done and how to make it interesting, unique, and appealing. All these things made for varying but equally valuable experiences, and I know they are things that may end up greatly helping me in a future job. Having completed this internship, I feel a lot more confident in my ability to work in a professional setting and to grow and further the skills I have learned in my time at college. Working at my host site has given me immensely valuable experience getting to see the kind of work I may want to do some day. It has given me a solid base of experience in this type of work that I believe will greatly help me in my future, no matter what kind of work I end up doing.

Respond to at least two questions below

1. **What were the biggest challenges you faced during your internship? How did you overcome these?**

One of the biggest challenges I faced during my internship, (and especially at the beginning of my time interning with my host site), was probably navigating the way the company is divided between in-person work and remote work, due to the ongoing impact and presence of the COVID19 pandemic. As I mentioned previously, many of the employees at my host site have continued to work solely from home, so it was not always easy to feel like my work was being carefully overseen and monitored. It took me a good few weeks to feel like I knew who exactly I could reach out to with questions, as well as how and when to do this. Overall, I found that I was operating a lot more independently than I initially expected, and though this turned out to be fine in the end, it was definitely a strong challenge at first to approach projects mainly on my own and from a remote work environment. I would say that the main way I found to overcome this difficulty was simply learning to be stronger and more willing to reach out to people to ask for help when I needed it. Although it was rare that I could have someone actually track my progress in person, I found that often times other employees were willing to do video and phone calls with

me if I needed it or send me clearer lists of directions on how to approach specific projects if they were feeling unclear to me. I learned that more often than not people are willing to spend time with you to make sure you feel comfortable and confident about your work, and even if you feel you're asking too many questions, it's usually better than not asking them at all.

2. Who was your site supervisor/mentor (first name and title) and what sort of guidance and direction did you receive from them? What was the communication style like?

My primary site supervisors, I would say, were Garret and Lisa, who are a husband and wife that own and operate my host company. As they lived in the town of Dalkey, they tended to be the individuals I would see the most in person and interact with face-to-face. Garret, especially, helped me out with many things in my time in Ireland, and was the primary person who got me set up and connected with other employees to assign me projects. Garret did not usually oversee my work personally, this role simply depended on what the project was that I was doing and which department of work it was most directly connected to. Garret was very much there to assign me to different things at different times and get me set up with other individuals to introduce me to their work and show me what it was that I would be doing for them. From there, these other individuals would be in charge of seeing how I progressed in my work on these projects. Garret was also the individual that checked in with me the most often to see how I was doing both with work and with living in Ireland in general. Our communication style was primarily via slack and other messaging, but he and I did meet up in person on a few different occasions. The first time I met him was to have coffee and get a tour of the office. This was also when I got my keys to the office and got all situated with a desk and all the applications I needed. We also met face-to-face a few other times for him to set me up with projects, and before I left, to say goodbye.

Additional Questions

1. What do you wish you had known before you arrived? Think about culture, logistics, host site, language, etc.

I would say that the biggest thing I wish I had known before arriving was simply more about the history and background of my host country. As I mentioned previously, I did not do the best job before coming to Ireland about reading books or learning much about the history. I had a basic understanding of elements of the culture and of the history of Ireland when I first showed up, but I definitely could have put in more effort to learn more before getting there. Ireland, especially, has a really complex and interesting history that greatly impacts its landscape today. Especially understanding the history of the conflict between Ireland and the UK, I feel, would have taught me more about the things I was looking at and experiencing in my first few weeks abroad. To understand a country's history is also definitely to understand its present state, and in Ireland, I feel this fact is especially prominent and true. To future interns, this is definitely something I would recommend doing. I learned a lot about Ireland after I arrived, but I think that if I had taken more time to learn before getting there, I might have had more knowledge about my surroundings and general experiences in the first few weeks there. There were a lot of things that sort of went over my head in the first few weeks because I didn't know much about what I

was looking at yet, and I think if I had done more reading and research, I may have been able to appreciate some of the things I saw more deeply in those early days.

2. What tips do you have for future interns headed to your same internship site, host city, or country? Consider discussing housing, transportation, clothing, budgeting, entertainment, culture, and social groups.

For future interns headed to my same internship site, there are a lot of wonderful things I can recommend. First off, I would say that I highly recommend doing this internship for anyone who is undecided but thinking about it. This job was absolutely wonderful for me, and an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. The job was flexible and really gave me a wonderful first experience working in this type of field. I learned a ton of valuable experience while also having lots of time to experience life abroad. The location of this internship could also not be more perfect in my opinion, because it gives you both the opportunity to experience the quiet of coastal life while also being a fifteen-minute train ride from the heart of Dublin city. I truly could not recommend this experience enough for anyone considering it.

When it comes to housing, I would recommend taking the time to find housing accommodation that is going to be comfortable while still also giving you the chance to meet people in your age group. For this internship specifically, I really enjoyed living in Dalkey and being so close to my internship, but it would also be very do-able to live in Dublin city and commute to the office. One big draw-back of the living situation I personally chose was that I was living on my own, and it was difficult to make friends because of this. If I could do this experience a second time, I think I would want to try living in the city, because I feel this would have given me a better chance to make close friends and meet more people my age. Looking for housing in some kind of shared apartment space or dorm would give way to these kinds of opportunities and be a great way to connect with people around you. I would also recommend scoping out what the public transportation looks like from any living situation you are considering to the office of the internship before committing to that housing. It is so important to have a solid and easy way to get between these two places, and not having this can make life a lot more complicated and uncertain in your host country.

Another really important thing I would recommend to future interns or individuals going to Ireland is to simply take advantage of every moment you have to see something new and to learn. I would also recommend saving some money for a few months before going abroad so that you have some extra cash to spend on the wonderful experiences that I promise you'll want to take advantage of when you're there. During my time in this country, I spent a lot of my weekends going to museums, walking, and just really seeking out new experiences all the time. I also did several day trips and weekend trips to other parts of the country. Doing these things were probably the aspects I will remember the most about my time abroad, and what really made me feel I was experiencing life there to the fullest. I learned to take advantage of ways to get around that allowed me to meet other people and also not break my bank. I often took the PaddyWagon, which is a family-run company that does day and weekend bus tours to all different parts of Ireland. This was an amazing way to see the country's most beautiful sites and to meet new people. I also utilized public transportation quite a lot and used trains to go both short and long distances. Staying in hostels on weekends is also a wonderful way to spend a few

days in a new city for not a lot of money. Really taking advantage of my resources and utilizing these kinds of things were immensely important in building the wonderful experience I had in Ireland, and these are all things I would highly recommend to future interns.