

Student Internship Report – Example only

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2003 Internship with the Australian Permanent Mission to the UN: Commission on Human Rights

What background knowledge do I need for the Commission?

Although there are no specific application criteria, there are a number of things which will enhance your application, and if successful, your time at the commission. I would highly recommend taking International Law, International Human Rights Law, or International Organisations to get some idea of how the UN works and the Commission work.



A demonstrated interest in the area of human rights or Government would be highly recommended. If selected, it's also useful to read up on Australia's position on a number of issues such as the Middle East and Iraq, and anything else that might be likely to arise at the Commission. Although not required, I found this background information was extremely useful.

What will I be doing during the Commission?

During the Commission our role was constant and varied. We began each morning attending various meetings, including the Bureau (1) and Western Group (2). After that a large part of our day was spent monitoring the plenary. In addition, we were required to attend 'informal' and 'open-ended' consultations on resolutions. These meetings ran parallel with the plenary and involved negotiating the resolutions and lobbying the Australian Government's position. As Australia was not only a member of the Commission this year, but also Vice-Chair (and thereby a member of the bureau), we were also able to gain an insight into procedural aspects of the Commission. It would be remiss of me not to mention the numerous functions and receptions we were invited to...it's a hard job, but someone has to do it! One of the most interesting aspects of the Commission was being party to multilateral negotiations. Trying to negotiate consensus texts was extremely fascinating, especially given the extreme diversity of opinion, although it was at times frustrating. Additionally, the plenary provided an excellent opportunity to witness debate at the international level.

What else can I expect?

My experience at the Commission was amazing, and it is one that I will certainly never forget. The chance to interact and network with people at this level is an unparalleled opportunity. As well as providing an insight into the workings of Government delegations and the UN itself, the internship provides interns with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with a variety of issues ranging from the death penalty to violence against women. Interns need to be realistic about their expectations of the Commission - it is not all about attending receptions and networking. That having been said, successful interns will have a fantastic experience, one that will be most enjoyable and rewarding.

And lastly...

I would like to thank the Monash Law School and the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law for providing this excellent opportunity, and for all of their support and advice throughout the time here. I would also like to thank the Dean of the Law Faculty for providing generous support via the Student Travel Fund. I would highly recommend the internship to anyone interested in human rights and international law, or to anyone interested in pursuing a career in government. Further information regarding this internship or other internships offered through the Faculty can be found at www.law.monash.edu/internships/index.html

Notes:

1. The Bureau consists of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairpersons, the Secretariat and representatives from all of the regional groups.
2. The Western Group consists of countries from the European Union, and JUSCANZ (Japan, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Norway amongst others).

For Simone's full report please go to www.law.monash.edu/internships/un-hr-past-interns.html