From **LSE** to **Westminster**

10 years of LSE student internships
I have had a series of interns from the LSE assisting with my research. The projects they have worked on range from demography and public finance through to the welfare state and, of course, education... It is an excellent scheme and long may it continue.

David Willetts MP
It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the LSE Internships Scheme here at the London School of Economics and Political Science on its 10th anniversary. Founded in 1998 with the support of Barry Sheerman MP, the then Chair of the Education and Employment Select Committee, and Patrick Dunleavy, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at LSE, the scheme has now successfully placed more than 250 LSE students on internships within the corridors of Westminster.

The School is also one of the most international universities in the world, with students from 130 countries studying here.

Many world leaders in politics, industry and finance have studied at LSE and, as this anniversary celebration shows, it is experiences such as internships that are so important in shaping future leaders and opinion formers. Indeed the current Parliament includes 34 MPs and 35 Peers who are LSE alumni.

Parliamentary process can be difficult to understand and is constantly evolving. In my experience as Chairman of the Financial Services Authority (FSA) shadowing the Financial Services and Markets Act, which gives the FSA its powers, there were a number of innovations. Appearing before a select committee can intimidate the most experienced business person, and I’ve had the pleasure of appearing before quite a few.

For students to experience this process is invaluable and gives them a competitive edge in a job market where academic qualifications are just one element of the profile they present to employers.

LSE is geographically and academically well positioned to deliver unique internships which provide students with excellent work experience, a clear advantage in the job market and the chance to gain familiarity within sectors that can be difficult to enter.

I would like to thank all those parliamentarians and organisations who have hosted internships over the past 10 years and hope they will continue to do so.
As someone who enjoyed a fantastic time at LSE, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, I still love the place and try in every way I can to support it. When I first approached LSE to initiate an internship programme, I knew that it was a perfect and natural fit between the two institutions so close geographically and with so much in common.

The workforce behind our 646 Members of Parliament and more than 700 Peers is often underestimated. Along with our researchers, diary managers and the staff of the Parliament, our offices thrive on the regular intakes of eager students who turn their hand to many different tasks, from policy research and speech-writing to the pile of filing that never stops growing. Many bring with them new ideas and provide another link for parliamentarians to the world outside Westminster. In the UK Parliament we still have a very small staff compared with many other Parliaments and these internships provide an excellent opportunity for students to work closely with members.

The business community often raises the issue of a skills gap between graduates and the workforce, with one of the best ways to bridge this gap being through work experience. This is just as important in public life. Many students may have their hearts set on a political career and an internship can spur on students and confirm their aspirations, but it can also open their eyes to the reality of life in Westminster.

A unique feature of the LSE scheme is that it recruits students from all disciplines. I find it encouraging that LSE facilitates access to Parliament for young anthropologists or geographers. We can only benefit from this engagement with a broad range of students.

I am delighted that the LSE scheme has reached its 10th year and continues to grow and develop. LSE is internationally renowned for its excellence in research and its interns have never disappointed. I would like to thank all LSE students who have interned with me or with other parliamentarians or organisations for providing us with their time, energy and expertise for what I hope have been mutually beneficial experiences.

“LSE is internationally renowned for its excellence in research and its interns have never disappointed.”
Party leaders

The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Prime Minister
‘I appreciate the opportunities that this type of scheme gives to young people and the importance of providing access to the political process. I thank LSE for this initiative and wish you every success in the future.’

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
‘Internships can broaden horizons and provide a great introduction to the world of Westminster politics. I also know that colleagues who have used the LSE Internships Scheme have benefited from the skills that its interns bring.’

The Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP
‘The Internships Scheme organised by LSE is an invaluable opportunity to gain an insight into the machinery of parliamentary politics. I know that my colleagues who have hosted one of these high calibre students have in turn benefited from their excellent contributions.’
LSE Careers Service continues to expand, develop and innovate and I am delighted that we can offer this unique opportunity to undertake political internships for LSE students. The diversity of students that we work with continues to grow and so do their aspirations.

Careers in politics, policy and public affairs are increasingly popular with students from all disciplines.

Those graduates pursuing a career in these areas begin on a career path less clearly defined than that of many of their peers. Established summer placements are highly sought after but rare. There is no ‘Big Four’ to target, no graduate scheme to apply for, clinching that first bit of experience is tough. Hence, the LSE Internships Scheme addresses a need.

During the 10 years since its inception, the scheme has grown from a handful of internships in Parliament, to more than 50 annual internships in Parliament.

The scheme has also expanded to include 20 internships in think tanks, NGOs, charities, research organisations and public affairs consultancies.

We have also developed the internship model to meet the demands of students interested in working in the corporate social responsibility field with a CSR Internships Scheme. To date, we have placed students with organisations such as the Carbon Disclosure Project and the Social Investment Forum.

We have also recently introduced a hugely successful LSE Entrepreneurs Internship Scheme which meets the demands of employers for students to be more ‘business ready’. Students are placed with startup and successful, small businesses as well as established organisations working on new ventures. The scheme offers students a chance to gain a unique insight into how new business projects are developed, managed and financed across a range of different sectors.

Wherever our students eventually settle, there is no doubt that the skills and experience they gain from an internship within Parliament are useful and relevant throughout their lives. We are delighted that so many students take advantage of this opportunity. For many students, whether they are international or from the UK, the LSE Internships Scheme provides an unparalleled opportunity for motivated students to engage in current affairs and develop their own views on the political and policy process in the UK at first hand.
The core rationale of any internship scheme is the value of direct experience. As the philosopher John Dewey famously put it in 1916:

*To learn from experience is to make backward and forward connections... doing becomes a trying, an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instructions – discovery of the connections of things.*

The LSE Internships Scheme began life as a Parliamentary Intern Scheme, designed to systematise the interning and ‘helping out’ linkages that had grown up over time between LSE and the House of Commons – many of them developed by Professor George Jones.

The UK Parliament stands in a unique position amongst the world’s democratic political institutions. Along with the US Congress, the House of Commons has provided much of the ‘source code’ for how to run elected legislatures and ensure a high level of government accountability to representatives worldwide. Our idea was to give as many LSE students as possible a worthwhile opportunity to experience at first hand what it is like working for an MP in Westminster, absorbing its atmosphere and gaining a ‘deeper’ knowledge of its operations. At the same time we were keen to provide MPs with a small additional resource that would be helpful for them in carrying out their duties.

From the start Barry Sheerman MP has been keen to offer opportunities to LSE students, reflecting his own wide experience of encouraging secondments between industry and Parliament and his knowledge of other intern schemes in Parliament. He has been a tireless sponsor, and, without his help and that of his wonderful office staff, the scheme could never have succeeded as it has done. Some 34 current MPs have been educated at LSE and many of them have proved a mainstay of the scheme.

Over the years there has also been a huge response by a wide range of other parliamentarians who have no direct connection with LSE and whose motivations for taking part have been to offer young people a valuable experience and to gain the assistance of excellent LSE students with a wide range of skills.

The LSE Internships Scheme has from the outset been deliberately quite different in design from other well-known schemes run by Leeds University, Hull University and the Hansard Society.

The LSE scheme that we developed with Barry Sheerman:

- is exclusively for graduate students, undertaking their normal Masters or PhD work at LSE and designed to widen their portfolio of experiences. For them interning is supplementary and entirely voluntary, and not for credit;
- draws its students from across all the different disciplines in LSE, not just...
from political science and international relations students, but from those studying law, economics, operational research, information systems, geography, anthropology and many more;

- draws its students from LSE’s many different countries, not just the UK and Ireland, but also America, Canada, Australia, many different EU countries, India, Latin America and Japan. MPs have consistently reported that they gain a great deal from these contacts. In particular, MPs working to improve understanding of certain areas of the world, such as Africa or the Middle East, value working with interns from these regions;

- sits alongside students’ normal academic work for their degree. Students work in MP’s offices for a day to a day and a half a week, starting in late October and, for MSc students, usually finishing in April of the following year as exams loom. This makes for an intense experience, with our students packing a lot into their available time and none of the ‘longueurs’ that can attend full-time internships.

Many LSE interns have already had extensive experience working as interns in their own country’s legislature (especially north Americans in the US Congress and Canadian Parliament), or in their country’s public service.

Equally, virtually all our interns have considerable experience working in offices and businesses and so they are able to fit into the routine of a busy MP’s office immediately and to begin doing useful work.

All these features quickly helped the LSE interns to develop into the largest of the parliamentary schemes, with 50 to 60 interns working in Westminster in most years. We have been very grateful to a number of peers who have also extended the scheme’s coverage to the House of Lords and provided an additional range of experiences for interns.

Over the years, LSE interns have also worked in the Greater London Assembly and in the offices of some London MEPs, again providing unique insights into urban and European governance respectively.

"We have been very grateful to a number of peers who have also extended the scheme’s coverage to the House of Lords and provided an additional range of experiences for interns."

Professor George Jones

The winding path of the LSE Internships Scheme dates back to the 1980s, when now-retired government Professor George Jones had the seed of an idea. ‘I became aware that LSE didn’t have a parliamentary internship programme. I’d had the experience of running an internship programme with an American university with a campus in London, and I thought our students could benefit,’ Professor Jones explained.

Professor Jones initially placed postgraduate students with MPs he knew. Only later was the scheme formalised.
The long-running success of the parliamentary scheme, and contacts with many different lobbying organisations who regularly interact with MPs and policy-makers, prompted us in 2003 to extend the scheme to cover them. Since then we have been able to place interns in around 20 different ‘policy shops’ around London, working especially for charities and NGOs with parliamentary officers, trade unions, the main political parties, and a wide range of reputable public affairs, public relations and governmental affairs specialist companies. Clearly these interns have a different experience of the representative process, but this aspect of the enlarged scheme has been intensively valuable for those who take part – helping them to understand how to present causes, issues and interests to representatives and policy-makers in ways that can evoke the best response and the fullest consideration of their groups’ or client organisations’ concerns.

We have now added another element to the LSE Internships Scheme – a growing number of full-time summer internships that are proving increasingly popular.

Every year a quota of LSE interns go on to paid jobs working in and around the representative process, reflecting the success of the scheme and the fact that London remains a big ‘policy town’ in international terms.

It just remains to emphasise how grateful we are to all the MPs, peers, NGOs and firms who have, over the years, provided for our students some of the most valuable experiences in their development. This has been a most generous gift to them, for which we hope that their efforts in return have been helpful.
Case studies

Faith Armitage (intern 2003-04)

Paul Keetch MP, Liberal Democrat member for Hereford

Faith Armitage came to London from British Columbia in 2002 to pursue a PhD in LSE’s Gender Institute. She had previously worked as a legislative intern in BC, so when she became aware of the LSE Internships Scheme she was eager to learn about the UK Parliament first-hand. She also saw it as a chance to relate the political theory in her course work to concrete political practice.

In December 2003 Faith applied to the scheme and gained an internship with Paul Keetch, Liberal Democrat MP and the party’s Shadow Defence Secretary at the time. ‘Paul invited me down to the House of Commons to meet him and his staff,’ Faith recalled.

‘I explained that I was interested in interning with him because I wanted to work in a subject area completely unrelated to my thesis research so I could stretch myself. Paul said he was pleased to have someone without preconceptions about defence or the military.’

For the next six months Faith worked one day a week in Mr Keetch’s office, overlooking Big Ben and Westminster Hall. She mainly worked on research projects for defence and military issues, such as creating a campaign pack to ban cluster bombs. Along with Mr Keetch’s staff, she prepared parliamentary questions and replied to constituent queries.

The internship also entailed hands-on experience with her MP. Mr Keetch invited Faith to accompany him to various meetings and events, including debates in the House of Commons chamber and Westminster Hall, and a trip to the BBC’s Millbank studios for a television interview.

This familiarity with Parliament has come in handy since Faith finished her PhD. Now a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at Birkbeck College’s School of Politics and Sociology, Faith is working on a project studying Parliaments in the UK, India and South Africa. ‘I am focusing on the UK, so my behind-the-scenes experience at Westminster via the internship has already proved helpful. I’m very excited about the upcoming fieldwork stage when I’ll be returning to the Palace of Westminster to meet with MPs, Lords and staff of the Parliament,’ she said.

“I explained that I was interested in interning with him because I wanted to work in a subject area completely unrelated to my thesis research so I could stretch myself.”
For Thomas Hyde, the LSE Internships Scheme was a key factor in his choice of LSE over Cambridge. He came to London in 2005 to pursue an MSc in European Politics and Governance, and gain hands-on experience with an MP.

Thomas spent the 2005-06 school year interning with Labour MP Sally Keeble. Part of the job was reading submissions on Monday evenings prior to the week’s Treasury Committee sessions – which he describes as ‘mounds of paperwork’. But he also got to work closely with Ms Keeble, sharing his opinions on key economic issues. Although he recalls these chats as nerve-wracking, they were also ‘a great confidence booster’.

Thomas spent his Fridays in Portcullis House next to the Palace of Westminster, helping on queries from constituents and researching for policy letters to Ministers. He was frequently sent on errands in the Palace, where he occasionally found himself standing behind the Leader of Opposition or the Home Secretary on the escalator. ‘Political celebrity-spotting was clearly a major upside to the job!’ he said.

Thomas also got involved with some of the events Ms Keeble hosted in Parliament, such as Schools for Africa.

‘I do not believe many people would have been willing to give a relatively inexperienced person such a large amount of responsibility in such a short space of time, although I am sure that coming from LSE helped foster confidence enormously,’ Thomas said of his internship.

The internship was so successful that Ms Keeble paid Thomas to stay on and write economics briefs when it ended. He admitted the difficulty he faced in juggling a challenging job in Parliament with revision for his exams and writing a dissertation. But in the end he decided it was worth the fatigue. ‘I also had the opportunity to network with other researchers and aides, and the chance to finally see how the UK political system really hung together in practice, rather than just theory.’

After completing his MSc at LSE in 2006 and his work for Ms Keeble in 2007, Thomas joined an investment bank. ‘Having done this internship and gained the subsequent work experience leaves plenty of doors open for me in the future,’ he said.

“I had the opportunity to network with other researchers and aides, and the chance to finally see how the UK political system really hung together in practice, rather than just theory.”
Dublin-born Niamh Gallagher came to LSE to study Comparative Politics in 2005.

‘Part of my rationale for moving to London to do a Masters was not just to develop academically, but also to gather some more practical policy experience in a new, vibrant environment,’ she explained. So when she learned of the LSE Internships Scheme, she was immediately keen to take part.

By 2005 the scheme had expanded to include public policy organisations as well as parliamentarians. Niamh interned at the New Local Government Network (NLGN), a think tank which focuses on local government policy and issues in the UK. ‘NLGN was a small but very active organisation, and a lot was expected of me from the outset,’ she said. Niamh was responsible for the usual administrative duties, but unlike many student internships, hers lasted seven months. After a while she was asked to co-edit a collection of essays for publication in early summer. ‘This helped make me a real part of the team, and focused my work over the course of the internship,’ she recalled.

Like many of the students who interned in Parliament, Niamh’s experience gave her the chance to apply theoretical knowledge gleaned at LSE to the real world. ‘I got a sense of how politics and policy works in the UK from day to day – what’s the best way to influence policy, where do the best ideas come from, and who’s who in politics – there’s no way I could have learned half of what I did from a book.

The experience proved invaluable to me in getting my next job as a researcher at Demos, where I worked for almost three years.’

Niamh is enthusiastic about the impact the internship continues to have on her career. ‘I would never have been offered a research role at Demos without the very practical experience I gained at NLGN. The time I spent at NLGN was crucial to building up the knowledge and contacts I needed to do well in this sector in London. I have recently left Demos and moved back to Dublin to work at the Children’s Rights Alliance, the umbrella body that represents the 90 NGOs that work on children’s rights in Ireland.’
Abigail Brown (intern 2007-08)

**Back Boris Campaign**

Abigail Brown is a British citizen who has spent most of her life overseas, most recently travelling to China as part of a Peking University-LSE Double Masters in International Affairs. So she jumped at the chance to learn more about UK politics through the LSE Internships Scheme, and was delighted to be assigned to Boris Johnson’s mayoral campaign.

Abigail joined a research team in County Hall across the river from Westminster, which quickly grew from four to 14 members. Her responsibilities included everything from the mundane (lugging hundreds of boxes of campaign literature) to updating a database of quotes from Ken Livingstone / Boris Johnson exchanges, attending meetings at City Hall and visiting the Conservative Campaign Headquarters at Millbank.

‘Added to the excitement of working for a popular political campaign were the weekly campaign progress meetings with Boris Johnson himself – often extremely entertaining and highly motivating. From listening to his many speeches at fundraising events – such as the Christmas party in the Star Wars exhibition – attending several manifesto launches, I learned that politics need not be boring to be taken seriously,’ said Abigail.

Although her internship wasn’t in Parliament, Abigail feels it gave her a good insight into a range of parliamentary issues and processes. It has also opened her eyes to how the campaign process works: ‘Research, operations, PR, fundraising and administrative roles are all crucial to the effectiveness of the campaign and every task, no matter how menial, is recognised as contributing to the success of the team.’

It seems her involvement with one of London’s most famous political characters made a big impact on Abigail, who was quick to point out that ‘the role of personality is fundamental to projecting a political message into the public domain’.

“**Added to the excitement of working for a popular political campaign were the weekly campaign progress meetings with Boris Johnson himself – often extremely entertaining and highly motivating.**”
Hugh Governey interned in Parliament in 2008. The Dublin native heard about the internship scheme while studying for his first LSE Masters in European Politics the previous year. Positive feedback from fellow students and a penchant for TV’s *The West Wing* convinced him to apply and he was picked by Lord Lipsey’s office while completing his second Masters, this time in Accounting.

Befitting his background in politics and finance, Hugh was responsible for working on Lord Lipsey’s newest project, the Campaign for Real Statistics. The campaign aims to ‘improve the use of statistics in public discourse, especially in the media,’ Hugh explained. He also stressed the role of statistics in policy making, and thus the need for accuracy and accountability: ‘I’m not good with numbers, but I understand the importance of statistics.’

Although a number of journalists supported the campaign and it was mentioned in *The Economist*, there was no funding for the project when Hugh arrived. The grassroots nature of the project gave the LSE student the opportunity to get very involved. ‘The experience has been great because it’s like a start-up business,’ he said.

In addition to constant email contact, Hugh met Lord Lipsey for an hour or two each week in Parliament, where he became the ‘go to’ for room bookings, emails and minutes from their meetings. ‘It’s just the two of us, so I might suggest a few things… I’m obviously of the younger generation, so if I see a blog or something relevant to our work, I mention it to Lord Lipsey,’ he said.

Hugh advises future parliamentary interns that the most important thing is ‘organisation… you have to realise you’re not deciding the policy or shaping the policy – you’re facilitating it,’ he explained. For Hugh, this meant a good mix of administrative tasks and opportunities for innovation.

“**You have to realise you’re not deciding the policy or shaping the policy – you’re facilitating it.**”
Ben Bradshaw MP  
*Labour member for Exeter; Minister of State for Department of Health; Minister for the South West*

Labour MP Ben Bradshaw worked with several LSE students in 2007-2008, an experience he found to be very positive. The Minister of State at the Department of Health said, ‘I am very pleased to have had three LSE interns in my office this year, performing a variety of tasks.’

The flexibility of the interns’ roles gave students the opportunity to dive into the work. ‘One intern who volunteered for four days a week was involved in all aspects of the running of my parliamentary office, from corresponding with local residents, to dealing with departments of state,’ he explained.

Mr Bradshaw was equally appreciative of his other two interns: ‘These came in on Fridays and have been able to take on one-off projects such as database management and specific research for campaigning materials.’ Mr Bradshaw’s flexibility allowed his student interns to balance their course load while also getting a foot in the door at Parliament.

Lord Lipsey  
*Labour peer*

Labour Peer Lord Lipsey has had a successful run with the LSE Internships Scheme. ‘I used Hugh Governey, my most recent intern, to help me set up the Campaign for Real Statistics, to try to deal with the epidemic of statistical distortions that pours out of politicians, media and advertisers,’ said Lord Lipsey. The project is a fitting one, considering Lord Lipsey’s past as a journalist and newspaper editor, and it has received considerable attention in the media.

Lord Lipsey made a special effort to include Hugh in more in-depth aspects of the research as well. ‘He was able to act as an administrative support, and to plug my own culpable weaknesses in technology,’ said Lord Lipsey.

The Peer also put a positive spin on the age gap between them, saying, ‘He has been a great asset, whose youthful enthusiasm and charm has complemented my own “grey beard” experience.’
Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Conservative member for Cotswold; Shadow Minister for International Development

Conservative MP Geoffrey Clifton-Brown calls his experience with LSE interns a ‘great pleasure’. He points out that the benefits of the scheme run both ways: ‘It is very much a two-way street and I feel that students who receive a placement in my office gain a great deal of knowledge and new skills.’

As Shadow Minister for International Development, Mr Clifton-Brown’s Westminster office is always buzzing. ‘The work of a Member of Parliament is fast-paced and hugely varied from day to day,’ he explained. The students who work with him receive a first-hand glimpse of all aspects of Parliament’s inner workings. ‘Over the course of their internship a student will find themselves assisting with the basic administrative running of the office, providing valuable research for policy papers and speeches alongside dealing with constituency concerns and liaising with related organisations and businesses.’

Mr Clifton-Brown believes the success of his interns comes down to open-mindedness: ‘LSE interns always demonstrate not only a strong foundation of knowledge, but the key ingredients of a willingness to learn new skills and to apply them through their work.’ So while an academic background is an asset, the key to getting the most from the internship experience is the ability to apply these scholastic tools to real life.

‘Through this,’ said Mr Clifton-Brown, ‘any student undoubtedly gains skills that will serve them for the rest of their life as well as a far greater understanding of the work of an MP and the functioning of Parliament.’

David Willetts MP
Conservative member for Havant; Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills

I have had a series of interns from the LSE assisting with my research. The projects they have worked on range from demography and public finance through to the welfare state and, of course, education. It has been a great help to me and I hope that the interns have also seen the important connections between academic research and public policy. It is an excellent scheme and long may it continue.
Although the LSE Internships Scheme started in Parliament, it has developed to include public policy organisations and NGOs. Race on the Agenda (ROTA), which currently works with 13 LSE students, is one such organisation which has gained a lot from the scheme.

The social policy think tank’s Head of Policy, Dr Theo Gavrielides, described ROTA’s experience with LSE students as ‘a two-way benefit’. ‘It’s not just the organisations benefiting from passionate, dedicated volunteers,’ he said. ROTA tries to get students very involved from the moment they arrive, when interns receive a list of ongoing projects and select the one which most interests them. Then they get down to work. An intern’s duties at ROTA can include anything from fieldwork and desk research to policy briefings and event-planning. According to Dr Gavrielides, the students are ‘not just spectators’, and after an event they sit down with ROTA staff to write about it. In the end, he said, the interns’ names go on the report as well.

Dr Gavrielides believes ROTA’s success with the internship scheme can be explained by the high quality of LSE students, who are ‘enthusiastic and passionate’. The internship runs for three months, but students usually want to continue working after this. He also credits the quality of the referral process, which guarantees that interns coming to ROTA are well-matched to its goals.

Dr Gavrielides described the programme as ‘a very positive experience’ for ROTA, and LSE interns would concur: three of the students involved last year got full-time jobs in similar organisations at the conclusion of their internships.

He also emphasised that the Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS), a youth-led policy charity that he is involved with and which seeks to empower young people to influence policy in areas such as human rights and equality, has taken more than 15 LSE interns.
Matt Peterson interned for Lawrie Quinn MP from December 2004 until May 2005. He was drawn to the LSE Internships Scheme because it offered practical experience to support his Masters in International Relations.

Matt spent a lot of time with his MP, during which ‘we developed a great relationship. He was an incredibly personable fellow, and he took a big interest in the interns he had working for him,’ said Matt. He worked alongside two other student interns and Mr Quinn’s parliamentary researcher, spending one day a week in Mr Quinn’s office in Portcullis House.

Between the usual note-taking and letter campaigns, Matt had some great opportunities to branch out. ‘The more interesting parts were when Lawrie needed research done. I assisted on at least one background briefing about EU policy that ended up in the local newspaper in the run-up to the election,’ he recalled.

‘The parts of the work that really stuck with me, though, were all of the little experiences outside of the clear-cut working hours.’ These occurred fairly regularly since Matt was interning during the 2005 elections. Campaigning for Mr Quinn offered an eye-opening look at British politics for the New Jersey native. The campaign trail involved everything from going door-to-door to more unpleasant experiences – such as the hurling of a brick through the window of the campaign office by someone unhappy with Mr Quinn’s policy on fox-hunting.

In Matt’s case, the internship also provided a mentor. Although Mr Quinn lost the election, he took Matt out to lunch and offered to find him another internship.

He credits the experience with landing him his first job out of LSE. ‘Lawrie wrote a very long and personal recommendation letter for me that was a big hit with my employer,’ he said.

‘Political philosophers have a great deal to say about the issues of the day – the Iraq war, for instance, clearly has scope for moral commentary – but they are often unable or unwilling to connect moral theory directly to politics,’ said Matt. ‘Working with Lawrie impressed upon me the importance and relevance of practical politics. I’ve been working in political philosophy since I graduated from LSE, and it’s been valuable to have that experience as a touchstone.’
In 2007-2008, Mary Honeyball MEP took on three LSE interns to help her with a variety of tasks.

2008 has been a busy year for the MEP, who organised a January conference called Tackling the Trafficking of Women for Prostitution. LSE postgraduate student Jillian London became very involved in the London symposium. As an intern for Ms Honeyball, Jillian carried out research for the website (www.tacklingtrafficking.net), compared and contrasted other organisations’ work on human trafficking and developed key themes for the conference. She became so involved in the project that she even helped interview new employees for the office.

Ms Honeyball is also currently writing a book on the role of religion in politics, which her other two interns helped to research. LSE postgraduates Emma Brannlund and Sarah Kellogg took advantage of their international backgrounds to contribute to the book. Swedish Emma’s research focused on religion in EU politics, while American Sarah followed the religiously charged US elections.

‘The great thing about all three is that they’re self-starters,’ said Ms Honeyball. ‘As postgraduates, they can already do the basics. They don’t need too much guidance, they know when to come in, when to work alone, and when to ask for help.’ For an MEP who is often in Strasbourg or Brussels, the interns provided a valuable service.

They met with her every two to three weeks, either in the senior common room at LSE or in her office.

Although the job involved some administrative work such as stuffing envelopes, Ms Honeyball tried to be more progressive in her approach to the internships. Sarah and Emma both attended relevant lectures at LSE as part of their research. ‘The scheme allows me to pick their brains and benefit from the different perspectives of international students, just as much as the experience will hopefully benefit their careers,’ said Ms Honeyball, who plans to continue using the LSE Internships Scheme.
New Yorker Sarah Hutcheon studied Social Policy and Planning at LSE in 2006-2007. She applied for an internship in Parliament in the hope of gaining a better understanding of British government, and was placed with Tom Brake MP.

With a little planning she managed to coordinate her schedule so that she was in Portcullis House whenever Mr Brake was in London. This allowed her to make the most of her experience, shadowing her MP, attending meetings with him, and developing relationships with other staffers in his party. Sarah spent two days a week in the office, mailing letters, writing press releases and administering the MP’s website. Out of the office, she attended public interest group meetings and Liberal Democrat events. She also occasionally had the chance to brief Mr Brake on party issues that she had researched.

Although she opted to focus on her studies instead of continuing the internship a second semester, Sarah enjoyed her experience and deemed everything about it, from the food in Portcullis House to the MP she worked for, ‘wonderful’. ‘What most surprised me about the MP I worked for was how genuinely accessible and down-to-earth he was,’ she said.

‘I enjoyed being able to interact with an MP and learn about the world of policy-making first-hand,’ said Sarah, who currently works as a research assistant at Johns Hopkins University’s Institute for Policy Studies. She’ll soon be starting a new job as a communications writer for an architecture and urban planning firm. While she has no plans to go into politics, she’s confident that her time in Parliament will continue to be of benefit: ‘The internship helped me hone communication and policy analysis skills that I will certainly need throughout my career.’

“I enjoyed being able to interact with an MP and learn about the world of policy-making first-hand.”
Samar Bajaj recalls the buzz surrounding the LSE Internships Scheme during her first few weeks at LSE. Despite its reputation for tough competition, Samar was determined to be accepted. ‘As a student on the MPA in Public and Economic Policy, an opportunity like this fitted well with the overall public service theme of my course,’ she said.

Her perseverance paid off, and in 2006-2007 she interned with Liberal Democrat MP Annette Brooke. Ms Brooke represented her party on the Public Accounts select committee, and Samar worked on Mondays and Fridays on her Select Committee portfolio.

At these meetings she was exposed to a range of issues, discussing everything from how the BBC manages itself to water regulation in the UK to London’s preparation for the Olympics to low-cost housing.

‘My main task was to read through all of the notes, research reports and background papers on the topic in hand and prepare a crisp, one-page brief for Annette Brooke that would assist her during the meeting. I also worked on relevant questions that could be put to the witnesses,’ Samar explained.

The fast pace and wide fluctuation of topics made those first weeks stressful, ‘But with time, I became quicker at doing the briefs and started to enjoy the variety of subjects,’ she said.

Samar described the experience as an overwhelmingly positive one, from the excellent lunches at Parliament to the close friends she made in Ms Brooke’s office. She still feels the effects of the internship today. ‘Although I didn’t realise it then, what I learned during the internship has helped me immensely in my career. I now work in strategy consulting and often interact with top management from large companies. The ability to deliver my argument accurately (and still keep it within a five minute time frame!) is something that now comes to me naturally.’
Linda Gilroy MP  
*Labour Member for Plymouth Sutton*

Linda Gilroy, Labour MP for Plymouth Sutton, has long participated in the LSE Internships Scheme. ‘I have had several interns – Nai Chng and Julian Elliot come to mind,’ she said. ‘They both did some amazingly good work for me – Nai on water and high charges in the Southwest water area and Julian on defence-related work for my select committee.’ In both cases, the interns were able to surpass the mere administrative side of the job and really get involved with research. According to Ms Gilroy, ‘They helped me drill down to important detail which I and my team would rarely have time to do because of the volume of work we have to react to.’

While the students provided much-needed support for Ms Gilroy’s busy office, she’s optimistic that the scheme benefited the interns as well. ‘From their point of view I hope it allowed them to experience first hand what an MP can do to represent constituents and to see the range of parliamentary tools which are available,’ she said.

Ms Gilroy attests to the quality of LSE students, pointing to their ‘range of research tools and skills’ as the keys to success in an MP’s office.

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For more information about the LSE Internships Scheme, contact:

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