

Live Art Development Agency Internships – policy and procedures

I truly walked into the Agency with an empty stomach. By this I mean, I ate up all of the opportunities (quite a feast) the Agency presented to me. I am leaving full but not satiated; I still feel I have so much to learn and see. Openness throughout the experience of being here made it absolutely fabulous. I mean that, FABULOUS. I simply cannot emphasize how much I have grown from all that delectable delights of this internship.

-- Hollis Mickey, Live Art Development Agency Intern, June 2009

What is an Intern:

By definition, an Intern is “a student or trainee who works, sometimes without pay, at a trade or occupation to gain work experience.”

This position is different from an artist in residence in that the Intern is engaged with the inner-workings of the Agency. In addition, the Internship work that he or she does is primarily focused upon particular programmes or initiatives of the Agency rather than his or her own artistic works. This does not imply Interning is not a creative endeavour, nor that the work done in an Internship is outside of the pursuit of an artistic/academic practice. In fact, quite the opposite: Interning at the Live Art Development Agency is an opportunity to engage and invigorate all of one’s creative and intellectual faculties.

it is important that both the Agency and the Intern share an understanding of the role and aim of the Internship as this grounds the experience of both parties in shared objectives with clear purpose. Speaking the same language from the start allows for a transparent process more likely to be productive for all parties.

Internship requests:

1. Letter of introduction

Communication regarding a possible Internship must be initiated by the prospective Intern or their representative (tutor, employer etc). As a policy, the Live Art Development Agency does not solicit Interns or advertise Internship positions. Acceptance of an individual as an Intern is made at the discretion of the Agency. Acceptance is dependent upon appropriate qualifications

(determined by the Agency on a case-by-case basis) and supporting references if possible.

The prospective Intern should send the Agency a letter of introduction which outlines why he or she wishes to Intern with the Agency and what skill sets he or she might bring to the position. Ideally, this letter will not be a dry sketch of skills nor an over-plumped resume/CV, and will instead demonstrate strong writing ability, creativity, a clear sense of what kind of experience is being sought through the specifics of an Internship with the Live Art Development Agency, and the skills and/or interests the Intern will bring to the position.

No matter in what capacity the Intern proposes to work, he or she must demonstrate initiative and self-direction, as the Intern will be responsible for his or her own projects and manage his or her own time. Because the Agency does not have a designed Internship programme, the responsibility of the Intern is to motivate independently with enthusiasm.

The Agency's responsibility is to make the Intern aware, from the outset, of the nature of Interning at the Agency; indeed, this document forms part of that process. The Agency hopes that these Internship opportunities will be incredibly valuable—and its worth is not diminished by the independence of the intern. In fact, the independent character of the internship opportunity is perhaps one of the most edifying aspects of working with the Live Art Development Agency.

2. Meeting and proposal

The Agency will then usually need to meet (or communicate) with the prospective Intern and/or check their reference(s) before making a decision about the Internship. References (excluding relations) will be able to attest to the prospective Intern's character and suitability for the position.

The Agency and the prospective Intern will determine the duties and projects that are mutually beneficial. In the first instance, the Intern will draft a proposal for his or her time based on their skills and interests in relation to the Agency's work. This proposal will be written during the process of accepting the Internship. With the guidance of the Agency, the Intern's responsibilities will then be identified in relation to specific Agency projects or tasks. Although the responsibilities will be confirmed at the outset of the Internship, they will remain flexible for the duration of the Internship. Each week (at the check-in, discussed below) there will be a re-

evaluation of the Intern's duties, to be sure that both the Agency and the Intern are benefitting.

Flexibility with regard to duties is important from both the Agency and the Intern. Nonetheless, specific projects—both short term and long term—should be identified at the outset of the Internship and reviewed each week. Having these specifics is essential so that the Intern has direction for his or her time at the Agency and feels useful. Hopefully, the Intern will identify and initiate projects and duties that are aligned with his or her own interests and skills. However, if the Intern is less familiar with the function of the Agency, a member of staff should have several projects outlined for when he or she arrives.

Once an Intern is accepted, they will be considered a member of the Agency team for the duration of the Internship.

Interning puts a responsibility on both the organization and the Intern. This symbiosis is essential to the success of any internship.

Pay:

All internships at the Live Art Development Agency are unpaid. The Intern will arrange for his or her own transport and housing.

In exchange for the work of the Intern, the Agency will usually provide:

- A contribution towards London/local public transportation costs, for the Intern to get to and from the Agency; the amount of this contribution will be agreed with each Intern before their Internship is confirmed; and
- Tickets and/or access to Agency sponsored or affiliated events that the Intern should wish to attend.

The Agency believes that the experience of an effective Internship has the potential to be greater than any monetary exchange. The opportunity to engage with the London—and, by extension, the international—Live Art community is certainly the best remuneration for the work of an Intern eager to learn more about the Agency.

Some educational institutions provide funding to support unpaid Internships. These funding opportunities sometimes require a particular length of time and hours (for example, full time for 2 months) as well as additional work on part of the Intern. The Agency encourages any interested parties coming from a university/academic institution to seek out funding opportunities sponsored by his or her school.

Hours and Duration:

The appropriate length of the Internship is to be decided by the Agency dependent on the availability—and hopefully suggestion—of the Intern. A minimum of four weeks is suggested so that both the Intern and the Agency might get the greatest benefit. A schedule will be crafted that suits both the Agency and the Intern's availability.

Preferably, the intern will be in the office full-time (10AM-6PM) most days of the week. These hours are suggested to give the Intern and the Agency maximum benefit. Interns will learn more by simply being present in the office, observing and interacting for the whole day, and acquiring a familiarity with how the Agency operates. A full-time schedule will also increase the potential for the Intern to feel integrated and valued by the Agency.

The option of longer internships that are no more than two days per week will also be considered, particularly if that schedule would let an unemployed Intern be eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance or the Intern could support themselves through other paid work. In comparison to full-time, a part-time schedule might affect the realistic goals and objectives of an Internship.

After-hours and weekend Agency events, which take place occasionally, can be broadening and informative for an Intern. While attending these events is optional, the intern will be strongly encouraged to attend.

Appropriate time off from a pre-agreed Internship schedule will be decided by the Agency and the Intern, with final discretion at the judgement of the Agency. Should the Intern wish to pursue his or her own academic or professional pursuits (ie job or programme interviews), the Agency will facilitate this leave, unless special circumstances or previous arrangements make this time off impossible.

Staff Meetings:

Unless there is sensitive material to be discussed, the Intern should be present, and a part of, weekly staff meetings. This gives the Intern an opportunity to learn more about the concerns of the Agency and to feel a part of the office environment. This also gives the Intern an opportunity to voice any questions, problems, or successes, and review his or her projects and schedule with staff.

The Agency maintains the right to excuse the Intern from this meeting, should it be necessary.

Weekly Check-Ins:

In addition to the weekly staff meeting, the Intern will have a weekly check-in with their managing/supervising member of staff. This check-in allows the Intern to update the staff member on the completion of duties, and to craft a schedule and set of responsibilities for the following week.

Check-ins will hopefully allow the Intern to stay on track with their responsibilities, ask questions and voice concerns (ie, "I don't know how to do this...", or "I would (not) like to..."), especially if the Intern's work is chiefly self-directed. This allotted time for dialogue and review should not preclude any other immediately necessary 'check-ins' (which might occur, say, if the intern has finished all outlined responsibilities, or has begun to feel that a task is no longer germane).

Notes for Interns:

When you arrive at your Internship, be open and receptive to all that the Internship has to offer. There is no one particular form of a 'perfect Internship' or 'ideal work' for an Intern. Nor is there one mode of learning from your experience.

Be sure to make a strong impression. Do not be afraid to share your thoughts and skills in a way that may outlast your Internship time. (This document was brilliantly drafted by one of the Agency's Interns!)

Other Terms and conditions:

Equal opportunities: In accordance with the Agency's commitment to equal opportunities, Internships will be open to individuals irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status.

Termination: Where appropriate, the role and placement of the Intern may be terminated by the Director at one week's notice, or immediately if behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred. In all cases the Intern will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken. The Director will report any such terminations to the Chair of the Agency's Board of Directors.

Discipline and grievance: Interns will not be subject to the

Agency's disciplinary and grievance procedures but must obey its' confidentiality clauses. However, where appropriate, any complaint will be investigated fully by the Director or her/his representative.

Insurance: Interns will be covered by the Agency's public liability policy and personal accident insurance.

After the Internship:

The Agency and the Intern will have a brief meeting and/or written exchange regarding the Internship at its conclusion. This open dialogue will address positives and negatives of the Internship experience for both the Agency and the Intern.

Ongoing re-evaluations of this document will be affected by the outcome of these discussions.

Continuing Communication:

The Intern is encouraged to remain connected with and aware of the Agency's activities, and the Agency will include the Intern on its database and in its regular email announcements.

This document was initially created by Hollis Mickey who undertook an internship at The Live Art Development Agency, June 1 to 30, 2009. The document was also written in response to: <http://position-unpaid.blogspot.com/>