ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY

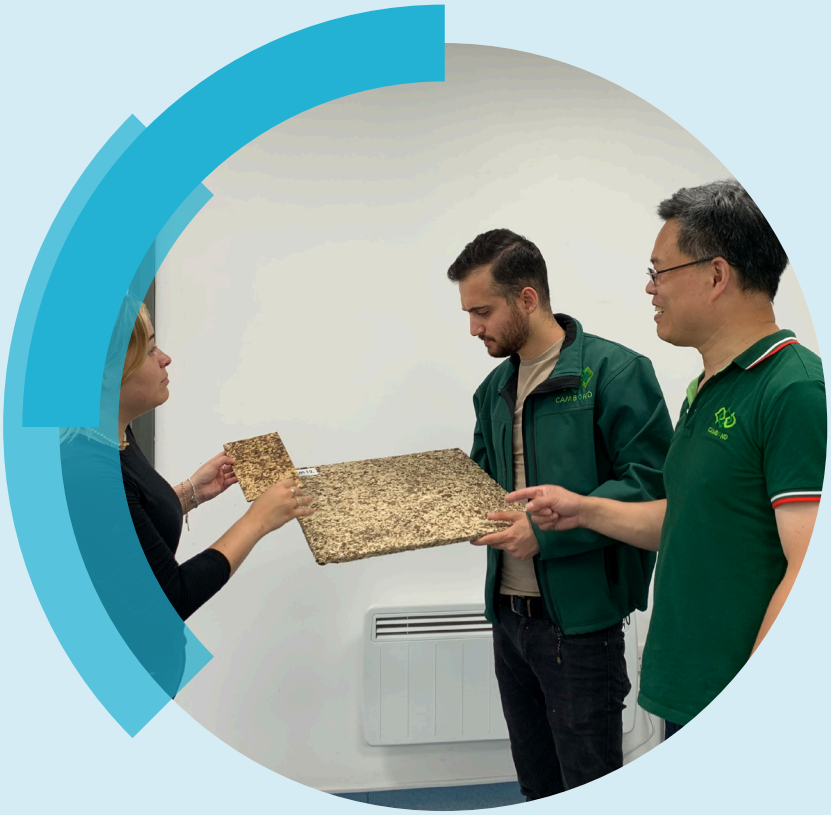
Big opportunities at small companies

Finding your place in industry through an SME internship

my.rsc.org/careers

ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY

It's the frustrating paradox faced by graduates everywhere as they near the end of their degree: "I need a job so that I can get experience, but every company seems to want experience in order to get the job." Sometimes it can feel impossible to get a role that uses the skills and knowledge built during university, and it can feel even more difficult when you factor a pandemic into your search.



At the Royal Society of Chemistry, we help graduates find roles that will help them on their way to successful and enjoyable career paths in the chemical sciences. This is why we offer graduate internship grants. These provide small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in industry with the funds to recruit the people they need to grow their business.

People exactly like you.

"The internship programme has always been a great way to test out potential employees before bringing them on full time," said one company. "We have had great success in previous programmes by keeping the intern on in a full-time role.

Why should I consider an internship?

It's easy to think of internships as temporary, unpaid opportunities, something to be passed over in favour of focusing on a permanent contract. It's also common to imagine that internships only offer part-time work or summer placements – something for a student to put on their CV and a company to use for routine work

These are common misconceptions.

Our grants mean SMEs in our EnterprisePlus network can offer paid internships where they can get to know you, train you up in a range of important skills, and assess your potential to stay on long-term at the company.

On the flip side, they also let you figure out if the role suits your needs. Many of our interns have found that while they might not have considered a role in industry before, the internship exposed them to an environment that suited them.

Additionally, the majority of internships offer longer term prospects in the industry with 60% of interns from the graduate internship scheme having their contract extended and 10% finding employment in other businesses in the chemical sciences industry (Figure 1).

> *My internship allowed me to experience the differences between academia and industry first-hand. In comparison to academia, industry is predominantly team based, client focused, impact driven and generally faster paced.*

Figure 1: Retention rates for interns at the end of their internship

Why should I work for a small company?

- **Watch innovative, emerging technologies grow** through validation, scale-up, and commercialisation.
- **Tackle important societal challenges** in businesses that value being a force for good.
- **Progress alongside a growing, early-stage business**.
- **Kickstart your professional development** and become an asset to future employers by developing transferrable skills beyond your technical skillset, such as training others, strategic thinking, and networking.
- **Explore a vast world of chemistry**. From rare earth metal separation and chromatographic techniques to computer programming and 3D printing, our SME community consists of cutting-edge, progressive companies.
- **You won't get lost in the crowd**. Working in an SME means the opportunity to know the majority of your colleagues, make an impact and be heard.
- **Employees in small companies get the opportunity to wear many hats**, from working in the lab to participating in discussions with suppliers, partners, and investors and helping with market research and business development.
- **SME employers often offer training opportunities** to help their workforce grow and take on their variety of tasks and responsibilities.

Being part of a small company has offered the opportunity to be part of many aspects in the business. I have been involved in the marketing of products, their pricing schedules and communicating to suppliers and academic partners. This has given me exposure to the fundamentals of market research as well as business development – two areas I didn't previously have experience in.

What will I be paid?

We offer a £4,200 grant to cover the first three months of the internship salary. Your exact salary will be decided by the company based on the level of expertise, responsibilities, and benefits package offered, but often our companies provide additional funding to make the salary competitive, or they adjust the salary following the initial trial period.

On average, our interns earn more than £20,000 per year and their internships last three months. Always be aware when taking on an internship that you are entitled to at least the minimum wage.

Why do we fund graduate internships?

Our role is to catalyse the chemistry that enriches our world and tackles the challenges of today. A significant contributor to these solutions is the vast and innovative chemical sciences industry, developing ideas ranging from plastic alternatives made from seaweed to breath analysers that can detect cancer.

There is often a perception among graduates that to succeed in the chemical sciences they need to get into a graduate programme in a large company. They are often unaware that beyond these large corporates there is a wealth of opportunities in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) consisting of up to 250 employees. These businesses represent 97% of the chemical sciences industry and employ 40% of chemists.

We have been funding our graduate internship grants since 2015 to raise awareness of SME employers and offer graduates a key entry point into the industry.

I have also been able to undertake training courses as part of the internship. This allowed me to tackle a number of new and exciting tasks within the company knowing I now had the new-found knowledge to do so.

How do I find an internship?

1. **Check Chemistry World Jobs.** We offer our SME grant recipients a free recruitment advert, so focus here first.

2. **Search where SME recruiters are advertising:**
    a. Milkround
    b. Ratemyplacement
    c. Graduate Talent Pool
    d. Glassdoor
    e. Indeed
    f. Reed
    g. Guardian Jobs
    h. University Careers Departments
    i. Jobs.ac.uk
    j. Local science park websites
    k. One Nucleus Jobs

3. **Try direct contact.** Many employers welcome enquiries from potential recruits, so consider searching for companies in your local area to see if they might be interested in taking on someone new.

4. **Speak to your university.** Your lecturers or supervisors might know if your university has produced any spin-outs.

5. **Check online** for lists of spin-outs in your area.

If you find a chemistry-based SME in your area, then consider directing them to the graduate internship grant scheme. If they're not already a member of our EnterprisePlus scheme they may be able to apply.

TOP TIP

Typically, the people doing the recruitment in an SME fill a number of roles in their company, from business development to R&D to marketing, so keep your request polite and concise.

Still have questions about finding a role in industry?
Student membership gets you support through our careers service.

We can't wait for you to join us in our mission to advance the chemical sciences and solve society's biggest challenges.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF CHEMISTRY

Thomas Graham House
Science Park, Milton Road
Cambridge CB4 0WF, UK
T +44 (0)1223 420066

Burlington House
Piccadilly, London
W1J 0BA, UK
T +44 (0)20 7437 8656

International offices
Beijing, China
Shanghai, China
Berlin, Germany
Bangalore, India
Tokyo, Japan
Philadelphia, USA
Washington, USA

www.rsc.org

@RoyalSocietyofChemistry
@RoySocChem
@roysocchem
@wwwRSCorg
linkedin.com/company/roysocchem

Registered charity number: 207890