

The Internship Programme

NIKEEL CHITANAND



MY BIO:

Name: Nikeel Chitanand

Age: 21

Tertiary: UKZN

Year of study: Final

Short term goals: Cum Laude

Long term goals: Pr Eng

Hobbies: Reading and going to the Gym

Skills: Leadership, Time Management, Problem Solving

Favourite Quote: "You only live once"

VACATION WORK:

Vacation work is a requirement for students studying towards a degree in Civil Engineering. However, with the current state of the construction and civil engineering industry, it is very difficult for students to find a company willing to accommodate them. I was lucky to have been given the opportunity to join the Internship Programme at Nankhoo Consulting Engineers (NCE) during my summer holiday from November 2019 - February 2020. Being introduced to a family-like yet, professional environment at Nankhoo Consulting Engineers was a great start for my first workplace experience in a working environment. The time spent at the company has been very valuable and rewarding and I feel better equipped to tackle the challenges that may present themselves to me in my final year of study at University.

MY EXPERIENCE AT NCE:

THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME:

Being a part of the Internship Programme, you are treated as one of the team members in a group of highly qualified and experienced engineers and thus, you are given the same responsibilities as if you were in the company for several years. In my first week at the company, I was given the task of spearheading a departmental project which included the Pavement Design of local and provincial roads. This placed a great amount of responsibility on my shoulders as I had only been in the company for a few days- but I was up for the challenge!

THE WORK...

Many difficulties were experienced in this demanding and challenging industry of work, however, with the help from the very qualified personnel in the workplace, the tasks assigned to me were completed in a timeous manner. The highlight for me was being able to assist in the GO! Durban project which was an experience that is invaluable in my career as a Civil Engineer.

WHAT I LEARNT...

My time at Nankhoo Consulting Engineers showed me that what is learnt at a University level is just the basics of Civil Engineering and the level of work expected of you in the workplace is much higher. For example, the Pavement Design Process taught at campus was a simplified method and I had to thoroughly read through and understand the TRH4 and TRH17 Manuals in order to complete the tasks assigned to me. I also learnt that the challenging calculations usually done by hand in University are not required that much in the workplace as most calculations are run on various software. However, as a Civil Engineer, one must still have an understanding of how these programmes work and rough hand calculations should be conducted to check the accuracy of your input onto the programmes. Requirements of the job included the use of certain software such as Rubicon and Civil Designer, both of which were foreign to me, therefore I was required to learn how to use these programmes which the surrounding technicians and engineers greatly assisted with. This will be beneficial to me as I enter my final year Design & Dissertation Modules.



SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF NCE

The culture at Nankhoo Consulting Engineering can be expressed by the phrase "Work hard, Play hard" which can be seen at the various birthday parties and lunches held at the office. The Christmas Party and Annual Year End Function were the highlights of my experience at the company. Their sense of inclusivity was expressed during the fun games played during the year end function. Events such as these was where colleagues from all departments of the company were able to socialize on a casual and relaxed level.



CONCLUSION

During my time spent at Nankhoo Consulting, I was able to gain a clear understanding on the role of a Civil Engineer in a consulting company. I gained a great amount of insight regarding the manner in which a professional office space operated. Furthermore, I learnt many leadership skills, and built my confidence when addressing the co-workers thereby improving my communication skills when interacting with professionals. I was able to make decisions regarding any issues faced and developed good problem-solving skills. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and was glad to contribute to the progress that occurred. I hope to enroll in the Internship Programme again during the winter holidays, should it still be running.