

Meet our talented interns

The AIDC Internship Experience

For the current cohort of Australian International Disputes Centre (AIDC) interns, the chance to gain practical experience in one of Asia-Pacific's most dynamic Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) 'hubs' was a unique opportunity. For Natasha, Saddam, Lee-Anne, Jun Won and Michael, curiosity about the processes and practice of ADR has led them to seek a deeper and more concrete understanding of the benefits of mediation, arbitration and other ADR services in an increasingly complex and global commercial world.

Perhaps reflecting the inclusive nature of ADR, each intern came to the AIDC from diverse backgrounds and with a multitude of work and life experiences. For Natasha Moulton and Michael Wolter, both Juris Doctor students who hold PhD's in History, the AIDC internship is an opportunity to experiment with a new career beyond academia. Saddam Hossain is a lawyer admitted in Australia and Bangladesh who has recently completed a Masters of International Law at the University of Technology, Sydney. He is interning at the AIDC to gain exposure to cross-border ADR and to augment his legal studies with some practical experience. Lee-Anne Yeo, an undergraduate combined law student, accepted an AIDC internship as part of a program offered by University of New South Wales Law School. Along with Michael, Lee-Anne feels that practical ADR experience will prepare her for the next stage of her legal journey: as a Graduate-in-Law at a global commercial law firm.

So, did the AIDC internship experience live up to the high expectations of these interns? Judging from some of their stories, the answer is a resounding yes. Above all, the internship provided an unrivalled opportunity to gain first-hand experience of various aspects of the ADR process, from liaising with mediators and mediation parties, to conducting ADR-specific research and participating in mediation accreditation training. Michael, for example, participated with trainee mediators in mediation role-play exercises as part of the ACDC Mediation Accreditation Day. By taking part in a wide variety of hypothetical mediations, Michael was able to personally observe effective mediation and conflict resolution skills to satisfy his specific interest in commercial mediation. Likewise, Jun Won pursued his interest in the legal and social framework behind domestic arbitration by co-writing a research article on the Australian arbitral advantage, to be published by LexisNexis. For Lee-Anne, the opportunity to interact with leading professionals in the field was a particularly rewarding experience.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, each AIDC intern, when asked for their one 'takeaway' insight concerning their experience, provided a variety of answers. For Natasha, the sheer amount of preparation involved in conducting an effective mediation was a revelation. So much more than merely booking a room or arranging a mediator, the mediation process involves a sensitive and nuanced appreciation for the physical, emotional and spatial dynamics of mediation—size and location of rooms and shapes of tables, for example—that all contribute to an effective ADR process. This preparation also impressed Saddam, who has begun to appreciate conflict as a creative as much as a divisive force. For Saddam, while conflict in commercial life is inevitable, how businesses navigate these conflicts can lead to sometimes unexpected and often positive results.

Significantly, each intern has been exposed to the venue, training and case-management arms of the AIDC and gained a perspective which could not be acquired in the classroom. With the practical, theoretical and philosophical insights gained by an AIDC internship, these interns feel better equipped to tackle the next stage of their legal careers.

VERONICA MASON

Veronica is an undergraduate Law/Arts (International relations/politics) student at the University of New South Wales. She is the inaugural UNSW Law Society Wellbeing Director and an elected undergraduate representative on the Law Faculty Board.



“I’ve had experience as a Legal Executive at the Children’s Cancer Institute, a Court Monitor at courts such as the High Court of Australia and Federal Court of Australia, and as a Paralegal,” she says. “I have been an intern at the Cyberspace Law and Policy Community and the Crown Solicitors Office.

“I’ve had international experiences such as an exchange in Lyon, France, and participating in a variety of national and international model United Nations competitions. I have been a Pinnacle Scholar for the last four years.”

Although she is no stranger to ADR – “I had competed in ADR competitions such as the UNSW advanced, immediate and beginning negotiation competitions and I had exposure to commercial disputes through my work as a Court Monitor” – she says the AIDC internship has been of great benefit.

“I learnt a lot about international and domestic aspects of alternative dispute resolution, both substantive and procedural dimensions,” she says. “I gained an insight into who the key domestic and international alternative dispute resolution bodies are and what they do.”

At AIDC Veronica was involved in the selection of mediators/arbitrators to cases and liaising with parties, and performing research into fields of mediation and arbitration, both domestic and international.

The most memorable experience in her internship, she says, was learning about comparative international arbitration law. “For instance, learning about Mauritian arbitral procedure was fascinating.”

HAZ ZAINAL-GROTE

Pro-bono Director of Debating and Relief Case Manager 2014

Haz pursued her LLM at UNSW in 2012 after being called to the Malaysian Bar. On completing her Masters, Haz met with CEO Deborah Lockhart to discuss a community program for AIDC - promoting ADR through a debating competition for school students. AIDC is very grateful to Haz for taking on the challenging role of Director of Debating and for so successfully nurturing the project from a concept to a wonderful learning and development experience for students and adults alike.



Haz says that “The program was a success, but it was the experience of working alongside Deborah and the AIDC family which truly made an impact on me. Throughout my time with AIDC, be it working on the Program or as Relief Case Manager, it was clear that AIDC consistently strives to be at the forefront of carving the path in promoting ADR to not only the legal community, but the public at large.

On top of all the work the Centre does, Deborah constantly encourages the Centre to push boundaries in fulfilling their mandate which keeps work and programs at AIDC interesting. AIDC is surely the place to be for those contemplating a career in dispute resolution.”

SARAH HERMAN

Sarah joined us while doing the Master of Dispute Resolution program at UNSW, which encourages students to undertake an internship as part of their degree. It was a natural fit. “In light of my passion for ADR, I chose to intern at the AIDC as I felt it would give my theoretical studies a practical perspective,” Sarah says.



This proved the case. “Being in an environment surrounded by commercial mediations, accreditation trainings and arbitrations has given me a real-world insight into the profession,” she says. “I have also been able to meet many ADR professionals who have passed on invaluable advice and shared their experiences.”

“My background is in the legal profession as a paralegal; for several years I have worked at the same firm and have seen first-hand the pitfalls of litigation. This is the main factor that drove my desire to study and work in ADR,” Sarah says.

“After graduating with my Masters this year, I hope to draw upon my experiences as an AIDC intern as I enter the dispute resolution field.”

GEORGIA FELTIS

Georgia is currently in her third year of study to attain a Bachelor of Arts and Law at the University of Sydney, and has developed a keen interest in ADR and Human Resource Management since beginning studies in 2011. She was dux of her college upon finishing in 2010.

Since starting out as an intern in mid 2014, Georgia has found the experience to be invaluable in providing exposure to the processes and success of ADR, and introducing her to behind-the-scenes work of a successful not-for profit.

"The variety of disputes and people who arrive make every day interesting," she says, "I can't recommend the volunteering experience highly enough."

At University, Georgia is a member of both the Sydney University Law Society and the Work and Organisational Studies Society. In between volunteering and study, Georgia assists a team of commercial solicitors at the University's Office of General Counsel.

JENNIFER TRIDGELL

Jennifer came to the AIDC first to assist with the inaugural 2014 AIDC Schools Invitational Debate as a coach and adjudicator and later working as an intern. She is currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts (Politics and International Relations)/Law at Macquarie University.

Jennifer says she became interested in Alternative Dispute Resolution and the work of AIDC as a means of increasing the accessibility of legal services for vulnerable demographics. She has a strong background in social justice, particularly in indigenous affairs and human rights, having done work with Cape York Institute with the Aurora Native Title Internship program and the Macquarie Centre for Environmental Law.

Jennifer says the experience she gained on the internship was "immensely rewarding, both to increase my understanding of ADR and to gain practical experience".

"I learnt about training models for mediation and arbitration and conducted research on dispute resolution procedures. I also assisted CEO Deborah Lockhart with the daily operations of the Centre."

Over the upcoming summer break, Jennifer will complete an eleven-week placement with Khmer NGO for Education in Cambodia. "This will entail looking at children's rights and compliance of NGOs with international instruments," she says. "I hope to continue learning about ADR within the global framework in my future studies."



RITAM MITRA

Ritam is a final-year student at the University of New South Wales. He will start as a Graduate-at-Law at HWL Ebsworth in 2015.



“During my month-long winter internship at the Australian International Disputes Centre, I was offered valuable exposure to the use of alternative dispute resolution in the commercial context, and given a fascinating insight into this unique not-for-profit organisation,” he says.

“My varied responsibilities included beginning the massive project of redeveloping an entire website, streamlining internal policies and procedures, and case management tasks. In addition, frequent training seminars and events at the centre gave me the rare and invaluable opportunity to meet individuals from a variety of professional and cultural backgrounds.

“Although I recently undertook an ADR elective at university, my experience of ADR in practice differed significantly from my academic experience. I now have a more practical view of how techniques such as mediation and arbitration are implemented in the real world (it's not all about the Harvard Seven Elements of Effective Negotiation!).

“I also greatly enjoyed learning about the wonderful organisation in which Deborah Lockhart, CEO, so graciously hosted me for 12 days. I will definitely be staying in touch!”

NICHOLAS BERG

Currently an undergraduate biochemistry student at Sydney University, we found that Nicholas is highly skilled in both the art of debating and scientific research.

Having been a valuable member of the AIDC Inaugural debating challenge as an adjudicator and coach, Nicholas was recently selected as part of ‘Team EchiDNA’, to participate in the highly esteemed Ivy Leagues School’s International BioMod competition, Harvard. The deserved and noteworthy inclusion of an undergraduate team at this event follows from scientific research undertaken with the Victor Chang institute and their significant application of bio-nanotechnology in the detection of Ebola.

“This is one breakthrough AIDC did not anticipate when we started our debating competition,” says Deborah Lockhart. “Congratulations Nicholas, we are most grateful that you were part of our debating adjudication team and proud of your tremendous achievement with the research team”.

And who were the BIOMOD 2014 Winners? Grand Prize —

- **1st: Team echiDNA - Victor Chang Australia!**

Thank you again to all our interns and volunteers.