

Work in the World: Internship Adapting in Azerbaijan

by Brian Hutchison, Ph.D., CCCE, ACF21

Aliya Iman is soon to be a 4th year student at ADA University (formerly Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy University) in Baku, Azerbaijan, studying Economics. Third year students at ADA University are required to complete an academic internship pertaining to their course of study. COVID-19 has thrown the typical internship cycle into chaos and students in Azerbaijan, like students around the world, are forced to adapt their plans to a chaotic situation.

Aliya is fortunate to be in week 3 of her three-month internship with Unilever as a Shopper Marketing Intern where she researches market dynamics and helps create appealing point-of-sale plans. Her search for an internship began during the start of the COVID-19 crisis when many internship opportunities were suddenly cancelled without notification. Even candidates in the midst of internship interview processes at that time have never been notified to this day about their status. Other have been informed that internships have been postponed to later start dates or indefinitely.

Overall, most of Aliya's peers continue to wait, wondering if and when normal processes might begin again. ASA University has provided some relief through policy changes (e.g., the deadline to fulfill the internship requirement has been extended to December), working with internship sites, informing students about what is known about internships, and providing career counseling to students.

"Students understand why the internship cycle is happening this way and still feel positive towards the companies. They are more depressed about the actual pandemic, and its impact on the world, than their internships," Aliya explains.

As companies do restart, Unilever is a good example of best practices. Asked if she felt at a disadvantage in her internship because it is virtual, she enthusiastically said "No!" She felt welcomed from her first day when announcements went out to her team. Only three weeks in, she has defined tasks to complete and is in 2-3 meetings each day with fellow employees. She is engaged and feels like she is building a solid network while contributing along the way.

Aliya has much to teach career coaches and counselors about helping students seeking internships during COVID-19. She is most hopeful that, "I will be prepared for the next world-of-work because I have proven that I am capable and adaptable in a virtual work setting."



Aliya Iman, 4th year economics student, ADA University, Baku, Azerbaijan

The keys to thriving as an intern at this time, according to Aliya they are:

- Adaptability is key. Not just being adaptable but being able to communicate that you are adaptable.
- Clarifying expectations is key. Companies were just as confused by the pandemic so being able to communicate expectations to them is greatly appreciated and helps set this standard in communication.
- Companies are more pragmatic. Meetings are held every week to make sure that people are adapting and tasks are clear and being completed.
- The work is the same, it is communication that is different.
- This is preparation for the future of work now, embrace it!

The future is bright for Aliya Iman, and students like her who are boosting their network as they try things and learn where their place is in it as a worker. These students, through their resilience and hope, will certainly be leaders in this creation of the future of the world of work.

"I am determined to become an expert in the field I choose so that I can lead others to bring positive change to the world." – Aliya Iman

Brian Hutchison, PhD, CCCE, ACF21 is a Counseling Professor who focuses on career issues. Also known as Global Career Guy he provides career coaching, counseling, speaking, and consultation focused on globalized work and mental health. Contact – email: globalcareerguy@gmail.com, Twitter and Instagram – [globalcareerguy](https://www.instagram.com/globalcareerguy).

