INTERNSHIPS are a great way to gain work experience and build up a resume. It is also a fantastic tool for networking in your chosen field and the opportunity to discover new fields of work or weed out the aspects you find aren’t suitable for your long-term career goals.

Many business leaders see the value in graduates who have gained relevant work experience while still at university. The Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MICPA), through its Students Sponsorship Programme (SSP), provides more than that.

Besides an internship placement with top-tier organisations, candidates will be offered sponsorship to begin the pursuit of highly regarded professional accounting qualification and a full-time job upon graduation.

Candidates will get a head start in the MICPA-ICAA Programme offered jointly by MICPA and the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia (ICAA), providing graduates with two qualifications and two titles – Certified Public Accountant, Malaysia and Chartered Accountant, Australia.

Three accounting undergraduates, who are current SSP candidates, share their experience:

Ahmad Zulhilmi Abdul Razak, a 23-year-old Bachelor of Accounting student from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and former intern of KPMG, said: “On my first day, I was eager to learn all about the working world and audit life. I was so thrilled to see the enthusiasm of other students. It really motivated me.”

Norizah Marzuki, aged 24, is a Bachelor of Accounting student at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). She just completed her six-month internship at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and shared her first day experience: “At first I was nervous, but the warm welcome gave me a sense of comfort and belonging.”

Yvonne Hoh is a 23-year-old Bachelor of Accounting student from Universiti of Malaya (UM). A former intern at Deloitte, she talked about her first day experience. “Initially, I was nervous. But the friendly Deloitte team put my fears to rest, especially during my on-boarding experience. This was also an opportunity for me to meet people.”

As an intern, you can expect to be assigned to a team where you will be required to support your seniors while gaining on-the-job training. The three candidates learnt how to apply management assertions and audit procedures in a real working environment.

They also learnt about related company law, regulations, various accounting software and more. They affirmed the importance of communication and interpersonal skills and learnt to be responsible for their own actions and at the same time, identify their strengths and weaknesses.

On why they chose SSP, both Norizah and Ahmad explained that it gave them the opportunity to secure an internship placement and a job with highly reputable firms after graduation.

Also, being able to pursue their professional accreditation before graduation gives them an advantage over their peers.

As for Hoh, the benefit of working at a reputable organisation, which was willing to sponsor her cost to study the MICPA-ICAA Programme, was the deciding factor.

All of them agreed that studying while working is not easy but with good time management skills, it is not impossible.

The study leave granted by the firms and advice from their seniors helped them prepare for their exams.

Some unique features of the programme include “open-book” exams and minimal classroom requirements, whereby candidates have 24/7 access to a full-fledged e-learning portal and are able to manage their own time and plan their study schedule.

The average pass rate among SSP candidates has reached 77.6%.

For the four technical modules, candidates achieved an average pass rate of 90%: Financial Accounting & Reporting – 79%; Management Accounting and Applied Finance – 54% and Audit and Assurance – 73%.

The pass rate for the final module of the programme is 100%.

These results speak for themselves and reinforce the fact that MICPA-ICAA candidates are high achievers.

“I will definitely recommend SSP to my juniors. It is like killing two birds with one stone – you start your professional programme before graduating and secure a job offer. It is a good stepping stone for students,” said Ahmad.

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