**Aspectus Group: Entry Submission for the 2018 PRCA Best Internship Award**

We have hired interns at Aspectus since our inception ten years ago and have always rewarded them generously.  All our interns are paid the London Living Wage as well as being given paid holiday and an hour for lunch every day.  They are also provided with many of the benefits our permanent employees enjoy such as breakfast paid for on a Monday, lunch paid for on a Friday, drinks on a Friday afternoon and regular all expenses paid social events such as an evening at a local cooking school.  We also let them take time off whenever they need it to attend job interviews.

We use our intern programme as an extremely effective way of hiring junior employees. 24 per cent of our current UK employees started at Aspectus as an intern (8 out of 33). This includes three account directors and a member of our operations board.  The previous head of our energy practice also began her career with us as an intern.

In the last 12 months we have employed six interns, from diverse cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds, three of whom were subsequently offered permanent positions.  We also welcome interns from abroad and this summer have interns joining us from Australia and America. To reflect our wider hiring policy, we try to ensure our interns come from diverse backgrounds.  This summer for example we have an intern joining us from Taylor Bennett, a foundation set up to promote opportunities to young people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds to enter the communications field.

We are keen to ensure all our interns get as much as possible from their time with us.  They are given our Internship Agreement at the start of their internship which outlines their roles and responsibilities. All our interns are given a dedicated line manager from the practice they are assigned to as well as an induction into the business from our HR manager. The work our interns do tends to mirror the responsibilities given to our junior account executives - as long as they feel comfortable with this of course. We regularly have interns pitching into the media, writing blog posts and articles and attending client meetings and journalist briefings for example.  If they are quick to demonstrate ability and a positive attitude then the sky's the limit in terms of what they can get involved in. The work is hugely varied and although the intern will usually work primarily under one of our practices they have the opportunity to work across the business including in our digital practice if this is something they are keen to do.

Our internship programme runs throughout the year and we keep it fairly flexible so we can accommodate individual needs. For example, an internship can run for a couple of weeks or up to three months and can be full-time or part time if an intern has other commitments such as study during the week.

We are extremely proud of our internship programme and the opportunities it provides to young people hoping to start a career in the communications industry.