

STEM Teacher Internships

What is this?

This is a 12-week paid internship in a STEM role within industry (e.g. tech/pharma/finance) for pre-service primary and secondary level teachers.

Who is involved?

A pilot programme commenced in 2016 as a collaboration between DCU, Accenture and the 30% Club. Since then it has recruited over 20 companies to host STEM internships through the Connecting Women in Technology (CWIT), 30% Club and PharmaChemical Ireland networks. In 2019, 32 students completed internships across 19 host companies - bringing the total to 54 participating teachers to date.

How was the relationship established?

The pilot was created by DCU, 30% Club and Accenture as a practical way to address the low number of students, particularly girls, pursuing STEM subjects and careers, as consistently reported by Accenture's STEM reports.

How can this exemplar be used to inform practice?

The participating teachers have since taken up teaching positions in schools and have incorporated these unique experiences in their subsequent teaching roles. They draw upon their experiences and transfer the knowledge and skills gained to their students and colleagues, to increase student interest and awareness of STEM roles and careers.

What was done?

The pilot programme was carried out with 5 students from DCU's BSc Science Education programme which qualifies teachers of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at second level. The interns completed a 12-week paid internship at Accenture during the summer months. The programme was then extended to Intel and AIB in 2017 and has since been extended to other companies – with 9 companies hosting in 2018 and 19 companies hosting in 2019. The target for 2020 is to extend the programme to offer 50 internship positions in summer 2020.

Why was it done?

Research, including Accenture 'Girls in STEM' reports in 2013 and 2015 showed that teachers are one of the biggest influencers in young people's lives and they have a powerful multiplier effect. This led to the pilot of STEM Teacher Internship programme. Subsequent STEM report from Accenture in 2017 and What Now for STEM report in 2019 further highlights the need to make STEM subjects engaging for all students from an early age and that giving teachers a first-hand experience of working in STEM industry has the potential to change students opinion on future careers in STEM.

What was the impact?

The impact on the participating teacher has been transformative - in terms of increasing their understanding of STEM roles and careers in industry, addressing stereotypes, developing the key skills required to be successful in industry and the relevance of STEM subjects to real world applications. Positive feedback from companies is substantiated by the fact that all the companies who have hosted internships have offered to host again and increase the number of positions available in subsequent years. One of the key impacts of this programme is the development of education-industry relationships and closing the gap between STEM in schools and STEM in the workplace for students, teachers and parents.