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Mathematics, Economics and Finance Undergraduate of the Year 2018

by Zara Loughridge (University of Edinburgh)

In 2018, Zara Loughridge won the Mathematics, Economics and Finance Award sponsored by Gazprom Marketing and Trading, and with this came an internship initially based in London, and then Singapore.

These are Zara's thoughts about the award.

Her words are taken from her blog post on TARGETjobs' Undergraduate of the Year website: <https://undergraduateoftheyear.com/blogs/my-undergrad-experience/zara-loughridge>

I found out about the Undergraduate of the Year Awards annual competition in October 2017 and thought it sounded like a fantastic opportunity. With each award targeted towards a specific category of undergraduates, I felt my degree subject and skillset were most aligned with the



As part of her prize Zara got to spend a week-long placement with GM&T in their Singapore offices.

requirements for the Mathematics, Economics and Finance Award. This award was aimed at undergraduates in related disciplines who demonstrated a required combination of academic excellence, personal skills and experience. While I didn't think I stood a chance of winning, I thought I may as well give the first stage of the application a shot.

As well as submitting some background information, the initial stages involved completing several tests set by SHL Talent Management and answering a number of short essay questions posed by the award's sponsor company. A few weeks later I was delighted to find out that I had passed everything thus far, and was invited to submit my CV and a covering letter to the sponsor company - Gazprom Marketing and Trading (GM&T).

Another few weeks passed, and I was again surprised and delighted to receive an email inviting me to an assessment centre in GM&T's London office. I thought that, if anything, this would be a great learning experience and practice for the future. The day consisted of a number of group exercises and a panel interview. It was lovely to get to know some of the other candidates and work with them during the group exercises.

During the assessment centre we found out that, due to a higher standard of applications and initial average test scores this year, GM&T were going to be offering internships to seven candidates in addition to choosing the winner. I left thinking how much I would

love to even be offered one of internships - after meeting a range of employees at the assessment centre and learning more about the firm, I really felt like this was somewhere I would enjoy working.

I tried not to think too much about the assessment centre afterwards - I really didn't know what my assessors or interviewers thought and knew that all the other candidates I had met were of such a high standard. However, not long went by until I got a call one day from HR offering me an internship. I think I almost passed out I was so excited!

Fast-forward another couple of weeks and I suddenly found myself surrounded by around 100 other awards finalists and a range of industry professionals and employers at a beautiful venue in Canary Wharf. Shortlisted from almost 4,000 applicants, at this stage I knew I was in the top 8 for the Mathematics, Economics and Finance Award. We enjoyed an amazing three-course meal before hearing from *Countdown's* Rachel Riley, who went on to announce

the winners.

When I saw my name come up on the screen as the winner I really couldn't believe it. I think my body froze for a few seconds before I could get up and receive my award from Rachel Riley and GM&T's Director of HR. I was so delighted to have been offered an internship and had already had such an amazing day at the final - to win was really such a lovely bonus.

As part of the award I had the opportunity to spend my summer interning with Gazprom Marketing and Trading. Based in the Product Control team, I was responsible for supporting a number of trading desks including carbon, FX and LNG.

As well as spending 9 weeks in their London headquarters, I was whisked off for a week's placement in their Singapore office. I was also lucky enough to be able to enjoy a few days exploring and enjoying everything the island has to offer. It was truly one of the best experiences of my life!



Zara (centre) collects her TARGETjobs award from GM&T's HR Director (L) and *Countdown's* Rachel Riley (R).

About the TARGETjobs Undergraduate of the Year Awards

The Awards were set up to identify and celebrate the UK's best undergraduates in specific areas, such as degree subjects (finance, computer science etc.) and other categories (the one to watch, women etc.). The final shortlist of ten students for each award are invited to the awards ceremony in London in April, where the winners are announced. For more information, including how to apply, follow this link: <https://undergraduateoftheyear.com/about-the-awards>