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Summer internship 2005 feedback to candidates

Purpose

This note is intended to give feedback to applicants for the 2005 intern position. It is also intended to assist applicants for future positions whether at Boost or elsewhere.

Marketing & Response

The position was advertised in mid March to twenty universities in the UK plus to several others in the Netherlands, USA, Spain, Bulgaria, Argentina, France, plus on the web. Just over twenty candidates applied in the one month period between the internship being advertised and the final decision taken.

The twenty UK institutions were chosen by Boost as having credible relevant courses and therefore a reasonable chance of acceptable applicants. Unfortunately about half of the institutions asked us to fill in web forms (each one different) and about half had email addresses we could send the advert to. This took a whole day of our time. One institution's form asked us for payment and so we rejected it. A second institution was emailed the advert and then responded asking us to fill in a web form and giving us a broken link. A third institution refused to give our advert to their students as we were not prepared to fix a salary (since our position is that this will vary dependent on candidate competence). In contrast one web form was all that was necessary to advertise to every academic institution in the USA, or any subset we selected. By monitoring the email traffic from applicants it would appear that only half a dozen UK institutions placed the advert in front of their students in time for the students to apply. **In our opinion there is a desperate need for UK institutions to get their act together as otherwise UK students will not have sufficient experience to obtain permanent employment.** The non-UK adverts were all received with thanks and passed to students promptly.

Applications were received from all the countries except for Argentina and the USA. Our dates are problematic for Argentine candidates. EU visas may have been a problem for many students in the US.

French students studying at French universities offered themselves to us with a rather substantial amount of French government funding: basically they were free.

Evaluation Process & Scores

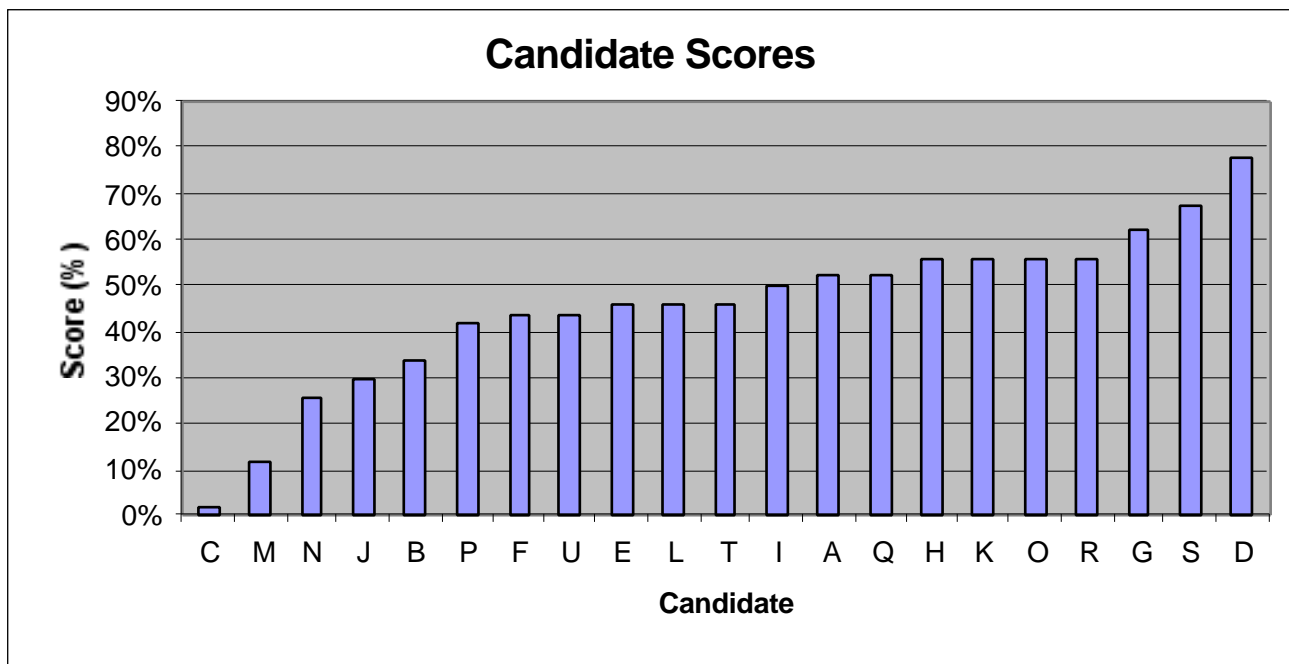
Applicants were scored **by the directors** on the following scale (0 = worst) giving a maximum of 50.

Application quality	0-5
Relevant academic knowledge	0-10
Workshop skills	0-10
Modelling skills	0-10
Language & communication skills	0-5
Cost of employment	0-5
Discretionary	0-5

As far as possible candidates were given an email acknowledgement of receipt within a day. Some candidates were asked to give supplementary information if they were felt to be a viable candidate who ranked highly. One candidate moved from a mid point ranking to second place on the basis of their feedback. Where reasonably practicable we gave direct feedback on applicants by email.

Analysis of Results

All candidates were ranked as shown below. Two telephone interviews were conducted with Candidate D who was then made an offer and accepted.



Our thoughts were that a score of less than 50% indicated a non-viable candidate, but that this was a moveable boundary depending on the experience of the candidate. Applications were received from candidates with between one and seven years of university education (candidate D was in his/her 3rd year). Good rankings tended to correlate with the number of serious part-time or Summer jobs that a candidate had undertaken. Those candidates who had traveled purposelessly each Summer scored lowly; those who had worked in unrelated areas (marketing, shelf stacking) or had undertaken purposeful Summer travel (charitable work, mountaineering expeditions) did better; and those who had undertaken serious related work showed most maturity in their applications and demonstrated the most relevant skills (candidate D had taken four serious jobs). In our experience as recruiters for larger organizations (Shell, ICL, ERA, ABB, Dresser) **the first job is the hardest** so students are well advised to start building their credibility as early as possible.

Common Candidate Errors

The quality of the English used in the applications was not terribly good – and the native speakers of English were not always the best in this respect. We were generally disappointed with the extent to which candidates answered the questions in the advert (e.g. cost, suitability, learning hopes) and only a few managed to answer all questions without prompting. **Read the advert carefully !**

Other Observations

We try not to discriminate and so did not ask for, or formally analyse, information on age, race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, etc. Nevertheless it was evident to us that there were very few native British applicants (i.e. more than 2 generations of residence) and that **few of these were viable candidates**. We do not know whether this is because few study engineering, or because few look for Summer work. It was also clear that non-UK nationals studying either in the UK or at non-UK universities were generally equal to **or better than** all UK nationals (i.e. including probable recent 0th or 1st generation immigrants) and in this respect it was noticeable that non-UK nationals had generally shown a longer pattern of relevant employment. We were quite happy to pay for a low cost air fare from any EU location, and **in a globally competitive environment suggest this is important relevant information for all students**.

Perhaps 1/3 of applicants were female and were assessed on the same basis as any other candidate. We would recommend that female applicants do not put photos in CVs if applying for professional (technical) work in the UK or northern European countries as it creates the wrong impression in these cultures (the male applicants do not do it). We appreciate that Asian & Latin cultures have a different norm.

We were surprised not to receive any applications from older students. We were shocked at the high pay rate some applicants wanted – for a Summer job one should typically expect minimum wage + rail fare.