

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Learning and Knowledge Development for a Globally Sophisticated Workforce (5)

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THE ESA YOUNG GRADUATE TRAINEE EXPERIENCE – A TADPOLE IN THE SPACE
COMMUNITY POND!

Abstract

Every year the European Space Agency (ESA) hires around 80 Young Graduate Trainees (YGT) across many disciplines and sites, with a contract of one year and a maximum extension of one year. The YGT traineeship gives the opportunity to take on a responsible role in supporting a real space project, gives a taste of the space industry and allows one access to world leading expertise as well as one's own ESA mentor. The author was hired in 2011 and worked for two years at the ESTEC site in the Netherlands as part of the Education and Knowledge Management Office in the Tertiary Education Unit. The author initially worked as a Systems Engineer on the European Student Moon Orbiter (ESMO) assisting in the closing out of phase B2 with the Preliminary Design Review before moving onto been a Systems Engineer on the 'CubeSats for the Vega Maiden Flight' programme during the final preparations for launch. Following a one year contract extension their final position was as a Systems Engineer for the Rocket and Balloon Experiments for University Students (REXUS/BEXUS) programme covering the full life cycle of experiments. During this period the author learnt numerous lessons whilst taking their first steps as a citizen of the space community, not limited to technical points, but also the insight into the workings of ESA and the industry, as well as personal and managerial aspects. The YGT position allowed them to make contacts and grow as an engineer and professional, who will now continue into the wider space world with their new found knowledge, contacts and friends. This paper covers the benefits of, and lessons learnt from, the author's experience as a YGT.