

A UROP perspective by Abdellatif Saleh

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Abdellatif was a Year 2 undergraduate at Imperial College London in 2021-2022: MEng Civil Engineering with a Year Abroad, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

UROP title: Use of artificial intelligence in structural design exploration for extra-terrestrial outposts.

Securing the UROP

I browsed departmental research webpages to find researchers' work I was most interested in. After contacting the member of staff I was most interested in collaborating with I received a positive response and a meeting was set up. We agreed (provisionally) dates and a project title. When applications for the College UROP bursary scheme opened I contacted my (at this point, to-be) supervisor to read over my part of the application, and he kindly contributed his section of the application when prompted. After a couple of months, we were notified that our application for a bursary was successful.

Preparation

This will differ person to person depending on what your supervisor thinks is necessary. Often, it is just some pre-reading of concepts or recent publications.

Experience gained

Putting all of the specific technical skills gained aside (which would differ project to project), the number one thing a UROP gives is independence. Being forced to learn something very obscure all by yourself is a skill that is not developed as part of the course or an industrial internship due to the plethora of support always available on hand.

I'm really pleased I have developed this skill.

In a related way, a UROP also gives you confidence in your ability to just have a go at something and to just learn as you go along, even if you believe you aren't prepared enough. I think these skills are massively important to engineers and scientists who want to go far in their career and work on the most exciting stuff that requires this level of bravery.