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MEDIA RELEASE

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Students gain industry experience

While some university students were enjoying a break over the holidays, 17 students took up the opportunity to gain valuable work experience at Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL).

Providing 12 weeks of paid employment, the QAL Undergraduate Vacation Program allows students to work alongside professionals in their field to assist with projects and to experience a real-life working environment.

QAL Managing Director Johann van Zyl said the vacation program had been going for over 30 years and provided students with the opportunity to work on projects that value added to the refinery operations.

"In twelve weeks the students start and finish a project which contributes to the refinery operations in some way. The project may be stand alone or subset of a larger project, though either way the outcome benefits both the student and QAL," Mr van Zyl said.

James Cook University student Emily Graham has been working with the QAL Occupational Hygiene team during her break from her studying a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy. Emily's project during her placement at QAL involves the testing of hearing protection devices with employees through the Fit Check Program. Utilising software to test the effectiveness of various hearing protection options on site, the testing also determines the best options for protection for each individual employee.

"The project I have been working on has been very relevant to my study as one area of Occupational Therapy involves rehabilitation after work injuries. Being at QAL has given me the opportunity to experience work at an industrial site and also gain an understanding of the type of activities and risks employees are exposed to," she said.

"I am enjoying my time at QAL, the people here are great to work with and I have gained some really good experiences that will help me both with my study and future career opportunities."

Another James Cook University student enjoying the program is Stephen Jacob. Working in the Research and Development section of QAL, Stephen has used knowledge gained in particle analysis to find ways to prevent breakage of the alumina crystals when passing through pumps.

"The work I have been completing at QAL really backs up what I have been learning during my study to gain my Bachelors degree in Chemical Engineering. I have enjoyed the challenge and opportunity to gain hands on experience in a large refinery such as QAL." Stephen said.

"The vacation program is a great initiative. QAL has plenty of expertise within their supervisors and it's a friendly workplace to work. I have also been able to discuss future career prospects with other vacation students and graduates in similar fields."

Although the major focus of the Undergraduate Vacation Employment Program is on engineering disciplines there are also opportunities within science, chemistry, commercial, business, human resources, community relations and accounting fields.

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QAL Research and Development vacation student Stephen Jacob has been conducting Alumina sampling and testing during his university break.



QAL Occupational Health vacation student Emily Graham checks the hearing protection of Joshua Purcell as part of a project during her university break.