



THE VIMA GRADUATE JOURNEY

This case study provides an insight into the first graduate scheme at VIMA, following the journey from the start of the application process to induction, through bespoke and accredited training, to finally applying training to client work and internal projects. It highlights successes from the experience and the legacy that the graduate scheme has left.

BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY – THE VIMA DIFFERENCE

As well as undertaking a breadth of bespoke and accredited training and 'learning on the job', we have been encouraged throughout our time at VIMA to get involved in areas of the business of interest to us, whether that is Data Analytics, Learning & Development, Wellbeing, Cybersecurity – or even create new internal initiatives to tackle areas not yet addressed at the company. Working at VIMA has therefore empowered us to develop not only as consultants but also as individuals.

Planning the graduate scheme for next year's cohorts gave us an opportunity to suggest improvements for the scheme. This shows the level of respect that the company has for its graduates and allowed us to give back to the company. As we plan for next year, we can reflect on our journey and how the scheme has enabled us to become self-assured, individualistic consultants who will become valuable assets to VIMA in the longer term.

APPLICATION

After sending our CV, we were contacted by VIMA's head of recruitment, Ben Williams, for an initial phone interview to go through our experience and why we wanted to work for VIMA. A week later we were contacted again by a member of the team to invite us to attend an assessment day at the Whitefriars office in Bristol. There were 12 candidates split across two days and each day was broken down into three sections that would test our suitability for the role. After introductions and a presentation about the company, we did some icebreakers with different members of the team. This really helped us relax before moving onto the first assessment which required us to delegate roles and work cohesively as a group. After a lunch break, we were split into pairs and given the task to plan a company holiday based in the UK, which we then had to present back to the team. The final assessment was a 30-minute interview with senior members of the team. Two to three days later we were given feedback on our performances and, happily, a job offers.

INDUCTION

During the first week of the VIMA 2021 Graduate Scheme, we were warmly welcomed by current members of staff and undertook the week's planned orientation. We met the other successful candidates who we would be working with closely over the coming months.

We attended various presentations and meetings which enabled us to gain insight into the potential progression routes and specialisms VIMA has to offer. We each attended a meeting with our new line managers and an introductory presentation on the projects and current clients VIMA works with.

The induction week aimed to ensure that we, as a cohort, felt comfortable within our new working environment, alleviating any worries, and obtaining a clearer picture of the sectors VIMA operates in.

GRADUATE TRAINING

Throughout our first couple of months at VIMA, we embarked on a robust training scheme that taught us different project control methods including risk, planning, scheduling, and cost modelling. In between these training sessions, individuals from the wider VIMA team came in to provide us with specialist training on subjects such as Agile Project Management, governance, and Earned Value Management. This internal training gave us the fundamental knowledge we would need in our client roles and be able to contribute to the success of our various projects.

During our time at VIMA, we have undertaken various accredited training courses including the Management of Risk Foundation and Better Business Cases Foundation. As an Accredited Training Organisation, VIMA delivers these courses in-house, so they were easily planned into our programme as a group and tailored to our specific level of experience. From the Management of Risk course, we learnt about a framework for risk management that covered all aspects of designing policy and strategy when dealing with opportunities and threats within a business. The Better Business Cases training course provided us with a systematic

and objective approach to all stages of business case development and how to plan spending proposals and enable better business decisions.

PLACEMENTS IN CLIENT PROJECTS

Each of the graduates has had a chance to work within a PMO team or delivery team, giving us an insight into how MOD projects and programmes are conducted. Within our roles, we have all been given opportunities to get involved in a range of areas, including Business Requirements, Approvals, Data Analytics, Learning & Development, Risk Management, Governance & Reporting, Business Change, Stakeholder Management and Assurance.

Our on-the-job training is on a rotational basis, which means that we have already had the chance to work in different teams and client areas and will continue to do so as we progress through the graduate scheme.

INTERNAL GRADUATE PROJECTS

As part of the graduate scheme, we have been working on internal VIMA projects.

The graduates were given the task of organising the graduate training programme for 2022. This involved producing Breakdown Structures, Basis of Estimate, a detailed schedule, risks, and opportunities. This enabled us to put some of the project management skills we had learnt into practice and improve the scheme for next year's cohort.



During a training week, we were given a brief with the task of turning around a failing client programme. There were several issues with the programme, including poor stakeholder engagement, a lack of resources, and deficient performance by the supply chain. After our initial investigation and analysis, we had to present the findings to a former MOD 2* and offer solutions to turn it around. This highlighted our ability to work together, be cohesive, analyse problems and propose solutions, and communicate with stakeholders. We gave a number of presentations during the week, which improved our ability and confidence in presenting.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Throughout the graduate programme, we have learnt a wide range of new skills and built upon existing ones. With a mix of accredited and in-house training, coupled with client exposure, we have begun to put our project management and consultancy skills into practice and deliver value to clients the VIMA way.

As we continue along the graduate journey, greater emphasis has been put on higher levels of skill development and exposure. Recently, we participated in a graduate exercise week that tested our skills in a simulated time pressured environment with uncooperative workforce partners, challenging both our technical and soft skills. The week was a hugely rewarding experience in which we learnt a lot about both project management in the defence sector and consulting, but also ourselves, and how we can improve our management of potential real-life situations.

