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front-end web developer

## What is the Openlab Summer Student Programme?



I have been approached on some social media platforms and asked to give advice on how to get into the Openlab Summer Student programme. Consider this blog post part 1 of my answer to all the queries and requests that I've been receiving.

However, before I write anything else I must apologise to all those who reached out to me asking for help. I should've responded earlier. The delay in my answer comes purely from a place of self-doubt that was seeded in me due to some mistakes I made last year. Gladly, I am past that stage and even though I realise that it is late, I still want to do what I can to help you (and hence, this post).

I have decided to answer the questions I have been asked in three parts:

1. What is the Openlab Summer student programme?
2. What are some tips/suggestions to get accepted into the programme?
3. What was my experience as an Openlab student at CERN?

Clearly, this post addresses the first question and I have already ranted for far too long to not dive right into it now.

Every year CERN hosts Summer Student programmes for students from nations that are its 'Member' as well as 'Non-Member' states. What are Member states you ask? Since I am not an expert on International relations of CERN, I only have a limited knowledge regarding it. Member states are those nations that work closely with CERN on several projects and (most importantly) provide funds to ensure its smooth functioning. Of course, there's more to it than that, but all you need to worry about at this stage is whether or not your country is a member state of CERN. You can easily check that out here.

## Who can apply for the programme?

Depending on which category your country (the one that you are a permanent citizen of) belongs, you can apply to one (or more) of the following programmes.

- Openlab Summer Student Programme (for both, Member states & Non-Member States)
- Summer Student Programme for Member states
- Summer Student Programme for Non-Member state

The above programmes are organised majorly for physics, computing or engineering students who are enrolled in an undergraduate or a graduate programme at a University or are recent graduates. (If, on the other hand you have an administrative background you may want to check out the CERN Administrative Programme). If you are studying Mathematics at University level you must consider contacting the CERN support staff to check if you are eligible because, although not explicitly mentioned, based on my experience I can tell a lot of mathematicians work there. Take some time to explore employment opportunities at CERN even if you are not a physics, computing, or an engineering student.

## What does a Summer Student do at CERN?

If you are accepted at CERN as a summer student, believe me, you'll be preparing for spending your summer in pure heaven. And that is not even an exaggeration! As a Summer student, you'll have a chance to be involved in a tonne of activities, all of which will make you feel like you live in a unicorn land. It's that awesome! Since I was an Openlab Summer student from here on I will be describing things that *may* be specific only to the Openlab programme. However, most of these will apply to all the programmes hosted at CERN.

- Work on a project – This is admittedly the most important task that each summer student is entrusted with. Every student gets a separate project to work on and is assigned one or more supervisors to guide them during the course of the project. At the end of the summer internship every student has to submit a project report and give a small presentation on the details of the project he/she worked on. If this sounds a little scary, allow me to present to you a few reasons as to why you should not worry at all:

- The project will be really interesting and no matter how scary the description of it looks like when you first read about it, it will soon start to make perfect sense.
- Your supervisors will have your back. They are such marshmallows! They won't scold you (duh!) and will always be available for help. You can probably get in touch with them even during the weekends via e-mail.
- You will have your own office and desktop and keys and a whole bunch of other accessories! Call me crazy but that really got me excited! I've never had an office before.
- The project will not be gargantuan and you will not be expected to complete it in its entirety. CERN understands that complex projects take more than 2 months to complete. In my case, for example, I was only expected to build a working prototype and not a production level dashboard with 101 features and handling terabytes of data!
- The details about the expectations and specifications regarding your project are very flexible and will evolve. So, all you need to do is discuss the matter with your supervisor(s).
- In some cases, the project deadline can extend (maximum up to 2 weeks). However, this is really rare.

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### **My workspace at CERN (pre decoration, ofcourse)**

- Attend lectures – These are not our standard university lectures. Scientists and experts come over to talk about and discuss major scientific and technology breakthroughs, the wow-moments, industry standards, new concepts and ideas that they work on at CERN or else where.
- Go on visits and excursions – Ahh! This is a big part of the CERN summer student programmes. While there, we were taken to several visits to prestigious universities (EPFL, Lausanne and ETH, Zurich), industries (such as Open System and Google Zurich), and museums. We were also taken to a short city tour of Zurich and, obviously, we visited some important sites at CERN (such as ATLAS, LHCb, ALICE, the CERN control

centre, etc). Be prepared to feel tiny when compared to the magnificence of CERN. In addition to the above, students also organised several unofficial trips to places such as Annecy, Chamonix, Paris, Rome, etc.

- Party! – I don't get it! How can every day as a summer student at CERN be a celebration? But somehow it really is. You'll be invited to dinners, barbeques, welcoming parties, farewell parties, ice-cream and coffee parties, in addition to that students can host small parties in their own rooms at hotels (we used to have a weekly party on Thursdays). Of course, you can always go on date nights with your friends.
- Network and build connections – Students at CERN are encouraged to meet, interact with and learn from everyone else at CERN. Special parties and events are held to allow people to get to know each other and share moments, knowledge, and ideas. It is amazing how much people are willing to help you out there. It is a very positive environment.

## Is there a difference between a regular summer student programme and the Openlab summer student programme?

To the best of my knowledge, yes there is. I do not know the specifics (such as the stipends, perks, etc) however, there are a few things that I learnt. Firstly, the openlab summer student programme is a joint venture between an industry (such as Intel, Openstack, etc) and CERN and therefore, I think it gets slightly more funds (CERN funds + industry funds). Also, the trips that students of the different programmes are taken to might differ. The number of students admitted to the regular summer student programmes (more than 250) is higher than those admitted to the Openlab counterpart (close to 40). Our lecture and programme schedules, as well as our places of temporary residence, were also different.

That being said, the students of all the three programmes work on important projects and get ample opportunity to interact with each other. Trust me, you'd love to be a part of any of these programmes.

## What about the stipend and additional perks?

The stipend will be more than enough to cover your expenses. In fact, you will feel like a royalty on some days (well, at least I did).

Your travel expenses and medical insurance will also be covered. On some days you might also get free food (I'm cheap). Oh and you will get free transport to and from CERN. Most openlab students rented a bike (for free) and so, there were so many days when the driver just had to pick me up and I would spread like a baby elephant across the seats of the Mercedes (Swag!). I miss those days!



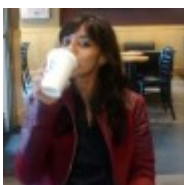
**A snapshot of Zurich I took during our visit there. This is the first time ever I took a good photo. The trip was funded by CERN. (They spoilt us).**

Hopefully, I covered up a lot about the programme. However, since I am a scatter-brain, I may have easily missed something. If that is the case, please feel free to ask me or comment below. You can (and must) visit the following links to know more about the programmes:

- CERN Summer Student programme (Member state)
- CERN Summer Student programme (Non Member state)
- Openlab Summer Student programme

I am working on following two posts that, when coupled with this post will be a lot more helpful.

- Tips and advice regarding the summer student programme
- My experience as an Openlab summer student



**Published by Dinika**

I am a front-end web developer who is working every day of my life to become a topgallant web developer. I'll feel like a million dollars the day I start working at CERN. Cardio hip-

hop, dark chocolates, classic literature, and indie music are favourites.  [View all posts](#)

by Dinika

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**Musings, Technology**

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