

Interview with Edge Hotel School alumnus Nidal Aslam



Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to catch up with 23 year old Nidal Aslam, who graduated from the Edge Hotel School last year with a BA Events Management with Hospitality although in common with many recent graduates, he's still waiting for his official graduation ceremony!!

So Nidal, looking back, what would you say were the main benefits of studying at EHS?

"There are so many! For me it was the "experiential learning". As an EHS student you get hands on experience in a 4* country-house hotel. All the time you learn, understand and apply the theory learnt in the classroom in the hotel. You also learn to reflect on how you applied theory and best practice, understanding how you can improve yourself and the customer experience. You develop so many skills - teamwork, coaching, leadership.

"It's also an accelerated course. You can graduate with a BA degree after two years which gives you a real edge when applying for jobs especially in such a competitive industry. Plus, the financial advantage of lower tuition and accommodation fees - I think I saved around £20k!

"And of course the EHS offers amazing industry connections; networking events; work-placement opportunities."

What opportunities did you get to meet professionals working in the industry? And how did that help you?

"Everyone at EHS had plenty of opportunities, right from the first week, to meet people from the industry and network. Industry engagement is really important for EHS and as a student you benefit from guest lectures and industry trips – to hotels, events and exhibitions. There's a real variety of experiences so you can understand how each industry sector and help you choose the right career path. I found the visits to Goodwood, Baxterstorey and the O2 most valuable, as well as the career fairs organised by EHS."



What was the best piece of advice you got from an industry professional?

"For me it was 'It's not about what you know but who you know!' Obviously you need experience and knowledge, but EHS provides opportunities to meet industry experts and to learn how to network and gain contacts. Contacts are vital, you never know when you may need help from them or even apply for a job with them."

Would you say that studying at EHS has given you the skills you need for career success?

"You need so many skills to succeed in the industry – organisation, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, leadership – the list goes on but the experiential learning at EHS really helps you develop them. For me, an absolutely vital skill for success in life and career is time-management. The time management skills you learn through this

course are unparalleled. When you're on rota in the hotel, you're working a 40 hour week on average and you still have assignments to do - plus you still want to experience the student life. You quickly realise it won't be easy but with good time management I enjoyed EHS student life fitting in hotel shifts and assignments, as well as playing in the University football team and spending time with friends."

Thinking of all those fantastic skills and putting them to good use, where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

"In 5 years I hope to have opened my own charity events company and I want to offer EHS students opportunities to experience events outside the hotel environment. At the moment, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and despite graduating with a 1st class degree, I have struggled to find a job in the industry. But, ever adaptable, I've taken up an opportunity in education! My dad and I now run a tuition business for Years 4 to 11 – 11+ training, KS3, and GCSE tuition. But my heart is still with events as I'm working on a project for a charity event for mental health which should be up and running as soon as COVID is defeated."



Well the events industry's loss is education's gain but with your resilience and drive, we're sure you'll be running that charity events company sooner rather than later. We hope you'll keep in touch with us here at Edge to tell us how you're getting on.

To find out more about studying at the Edge Hotel School visit:
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/edge-hotel-school>