Industrial year process for students in Computer Science

This document describes the administrative procedure for computer science students wishing to take an industrial placement. Other information is available describing the benefits, expected learning outcomes and assessment of industrial placements.

Who should take industrial placement?

All BEng and MEng students MUST take an assessed industrial placement following their second year of study as part of their degree scheme. Other single honours schemes within the Computer Science department have variants both with and without a sandwich year. If you are on a scheme which requires a sandwich year, and decide not to take one, you will be required to change your scheme (e.g. G401 to G400). Students doing Computer Science with a foreign language are required to spend their sandwich year in a country appropriate to the language they are studying. Students on these schemes will not be allowed to continue on these schemes if they fail to secure a suitable industrial placement. Students on other schemes (e.g. G400, G450, H620, FH56, all joint honours or other major/minor combinations) can optionally take an industrial placement that is not part of their course and is therefore not assessed.

IY application process (student perspective)

All students must realise that industrial placements are real jobs with real employers. The department will provide support and advice to help you find a job, however *we cannot guarantee placements to students on sandwich schemes*. Employers select students on merit using all the normal selection procedures and rigour that they do for graduate positions.

The application process starts near the beginning of the second year of study. Some large employers recruit early and positions may be filled before Christmas. Note also that for most positions you will be in competition with students from other institutions.

Very few students get the first job they apply for, but nearly all can get an appropriate job if they put in the effort. The department and careers service will help as much as possible, however *the responsibility for finding an industrial year placement ultimately lies with the student*. All students must keep the department (Industrial Placement Administrator) informed of progress – applications made, interviews attended, and the outcome. We cannot help if we do not know that problems exist.

The easy way to apply for a job is simply to send your CV. A covering letter is always a good idea. But if an employer asks you to fill out an application form, you should not be put off. Think to yourself that other students may not be bothered to fill out an application form, therefore you will have less competition. Also, you will demonstrate to the employer that you are genuinely interested in the job.

Getting started

Within the first few weeks of term in your second year, you will have a talk about industrial placements. Even before the talk students should start updating their CV produced in the first year and start thinking about the type of job or company you might like to work for.

CV

Students *must obtain permission* from the member of staff they choose to act as their referee. Staff have been known to refuse to give a reference for students who have not asked them first! The student can then sign up with the IY Administrator for the Gregynog weekend (see below). Students may choose any member of staff that knows them as their referee. Often this will be their 1st or 2nd year tutor, but it does not have to be. Note that members of staff are not obliged to agree to be a referee, in particular tutors with too many requests are likely to refuse. Get in early!

Note that although some feedback on CVs will be received during the Gregynog activity weekend this weekend is primarily aimed at the interview process and assumes that CVs have already been sent to employers. Students may wish to update their CV following the interviews and these do not need to be shown to your referee. Students should *not* wait for the Gregynog weekend before making applications, since a few deadlines (often for the more prestigious placements) fall before the weekend. Note also that CVs are a very personal document and

as such computer science staff can only be expected to point out generally accepted or severe pitfalls. If you require more subtle advice concerning the finer points of style for example you should visit the Careers service.

Sign up

All students in the computer science department intending to take an industrial placement year must inform the IY Administrator during the first semester of their second year. This especially applies to students on courses with optional placement years – otherwise we won't know you want one! All those with a compulsory IY will be deemed to have signed up when they pay their money for the Gregynog employability weekend. Note we cannot guarantee a place at Gregynog for students who are not on a scheme requiring an IY. Students must also notify the Industrial Placement Administrator (preferably by email) when they make applications and receive offers or rejections. When an offer is accepted the IY Administrator must be given the details of the placement (company, location, name of contact etc). You will then be given other administrative information as necessary for your placement. We will also inform the Academic office that you will be taking a placement.

Finding a placement

Many employers regularly take computer science placement students. These opportunities will be made available on the Department website, and any paper flyers the company might supply us with, placed on the IY notice board. The application deadlines and information about how to apply will be given. Most placements will require a CV and covering letter to be sent to the company. Many companies accept email applications, but you should be prepared to use an envelope and stamp! Students should remember that applications must arrive in good time for the deadline. Some companies have special application forms and these will be available from the Industrial Placement Administrator. Occasionally the IY Administrator might collect applications on a given closing date and forward them to the company. This will be clearly stated on the advertisement.

The Industrial Placement Administrator will also keep any additional literature we might have about companies or placements. Students should also check the YES and careers website for companies that cover a number of disciplines, or non-computing oriented companies.

The website is not the only source of placements. Jobs are advertised in the press, through recruitment companies, by word of mouth, and on the wider web. Students may know of companies local to their home or have personal contacts with potential employers. Many students have success by applying 'on spec' to companies they believe might offer opportunities – for example companies looking for graduates might also employ an IY student. All of these possibilities should be considered.

Students should contact the Industrial Year Coordinator if they need to determine the suitability of a particular job for their degree scheme.

Other support

Lots of help is available. An appointment can be made with the careers office for advice on making and targeting applications, improving their interview technique, or detailed advice on CV styles and trends etc. Students who are not having success after a number of applications should visit the IY coordinator and or the careers service for further advice.

During the placement

The department will write to students on an industrial placement in or before October. A member of staff will be allocated to each student as an Academic Supervisor. The Academic supervisor will visit during the year and may request reports. The Academic supervisor will normally also be the first point of contact with the department in the case of any problems encountered during the year.

Students with resit exams need to consider carefully. *Do not forget about these!* Talk to your academic supervisor and/or a department advisor and agree when is the sensible time to do them if options are available. There is paperwork involved and if this is not completed you cannot sit an exam even if you turn up for it…

The accommodation office will write to students on a placement around Christmas time to allow you to apply for places in hall for the following academic year. However, be prepared to chase them; things can go wrong (is your address correct on your student record, for example). Recently, the accommodation office deemed it

sufficient to merely inform students via the weekly email, so do keep an eye on that.

The Academic office will send provisional registration forms for the third year of study year around June. Note you will receive these later than students not taking an industrial year.

Students taking a compulsory assessed placement should refer to the **Student Handbook** for information regarding the contribution the placement makes to their degree. Details of the assessment itself are available in the **Report Guidelines**, linked from the main IY web page.

If you have any concerns about health and safety matters you should inform your academic supervisor immediately.

Last update 24/09/2015 Neal Snooke