Computer Science Industrial Placement Students

Information for employers

Undergraduate students in computer science are strongly encouraged to spend a year with an appropriate industrial company, and for this reason we provide a certain amount of help and encouragement to find suitable places. The placement year comes between the second and the third (taught) years of the course. Students work the year with companies that vary from small software houses to multi-national engineering and manufacturing companies, in some cases abroad. Applications for industrial year placement are normally made between November and May in the second year of the undergraduate course, with the bulk of placements being advertised to students around February-March.

Such a year is compulsory for students registered for MEng and BEng degrees. All other single honours degree schemes come in two versions; one with, and one without, a compulsory industrial year. Further details of the degree schemes, courses, and experience students will have are available from
https://courses.aber.ac.uk/subjects/#computer-science
or from the Industrial Year Coordinator (cs-iy-admin@aber.ac.uk).

Where the year is compulsory, it is known as an *Industrial year* (IY) or *Year in Employment.* On other schemes, where a year out is optional, it is known as a *Sandwich Year* or Year in Employment (YES) year. The IY is administered by the Computer Science department and the student will have an academic supervisor during the year and will retain their student status during the year. The IY will form part of the assessment for their degree. YES students are administered by the careers service and will not retain their student status during the year. The YES year does not form a formal part of the degree assessment. While the practical difference in terms of experience is insignificant it can have an impact on issues such as visa entitlement and council and other tax status.

Advantages to employers
- A chance to take on lively, competent, energetic young people.
- Employers have the chance to survey some of the best students before they graduate. Many companies are able to re employ their industrial placement students after they graduate.
- A cost effective solution to short term staffing and project work.
- During their final year students may carry out an employer inspired final year major project, which can be of benefit to both student and employer.

The vast majority of employers give very high praise for their students as reflected by the significant number of students who return to take up permanent positions with their placement company after graduation. Some employers are even motivated to give extra incentives such as sponsorships during the final taught part of the degree.

Employers can help provide the best experience and future opportunities to the students by providing an environment where they can:

- Increase their self-confidence and awareness.
- Increase their commercial awareness.
- Develop further their negotiation, leadership and teamwork skills.
- Cite relevant work experience on their CV.
- Fulfil the specific learning objectives itemized in a later section.

Employing a student - procedure

Potential employers should contact the **Industrial Placement Administrator** (cs-iy-admin@aber.ac.uk) who will arrange advertisement of the placement in the department through a variety of channels. Placements can be advertised at any time during the year for start dates during the summer period. Most students are available for employment following their second year exams at the end of May.

Employers should specify what form the application should take. Employers typically request one of the following:

- Students individually send their CV and covering letter to the employer in response to an advertised role.
- Students make an online application.
- Students request an application form from the employer.
- Employers send the department application forms to distribute to interested students.
- By arrangement we can collect applications and forward complete with references for the students.

Selection interviews may be held at the employer's premises or in the department here at Aberystwyth. Some large employers interviewing for students from several disciplines may arrange their selection interviews through the **Year in Employment Scheme** office.

Students and employers can negotiate when and for how long the placement takes place between the end of the summer term (June) and the beginning of the Autumn (end September) term of the following year. Students may work for the extra summer months if they wish (although the current IY Coordinator encourages a vacation prior to embarking on the demanding third year of study). An industrial year for Sandwich year students must be a minimum of 36 weeks however the majority are 12 months and that is our preferred duration.

Employer Responsibilities

Placements should encourage the student to fulfil the industrial placement *learning objectives* for their course. The learning objectives for our Sandwich students are described as follows.

Upon completion of the industrial placement students should be able to:
- Describe the structure and organizational environment of the company.
- Describe experience of working in a professional (commercial) working environment.
- Describe and critically analyse experience of working in a team and/or working towards part of a larger strategic endeavour, or company objectives.
- Discuss and evaluate the management culture of the company.
- Develop and appreciate the need for time keeping and planning skills.
- Describe their technical experience in an area of the computing/IT/Software industry.
- Critically analyse the technical and non-technical aspects of their working environment

The learning outcomes are assessed through the report completed by the student at end of the industrial placement.

Health and safety

While students are on placements, they are subject to the same health and safety provisions as other employees. University staff do not have any expertise in, nor any responsibility for, health and safety matters in the wide variety of work environments that such students may find themselves in. This responsibility lies entirely with the employer providing the placement. If, however, the employer has any concerns regarding a student's compliance with health and safety regulations, we ask that that the student's academic supervisor be informed immediately.

Supervisory Visits

Each student is allocated an Academic Supervisor near the start of the placement. This person will be a member of the teaching staff of the department and will maintain regular contact with the student. For students taking a placement as a compulsory part of their course the academic supervisor will normally arrange to visit the student twice at a mutually convenient time during the placement. Some of these visits may be carried out online. The line manager responsible for the student should be available to discuss progress.

Assessment

Students on assessed placements are required to submit a substantial report for assessment. Guidelines for this report are available. Employers are asked to assist the academic supervisor in assessing the performance mark given to the student by providing feedback to the academic supervisor on the Employers Assessment Questionnaire available at
https://www.aber.ac.uk/~dcswww/Dept/Teaching/Industrial_Placement/IY/IYHomePage.html

Salary

Our students do not have access to a full student loan during their industrial placement; it is expected that the employer will pay the student during the year. Typical salaries at present are in the range £18,000 – 25,000. Students can usually only afford to take placements at the lowest end on this range if they can cut costs in some way – for example, living at home or staying in student style accommodation.

To discuss any aspect of Industrial Placements please contact the Industrial Year Coordinator:

Dr. Neal Snooke
Department of Computer Science
Aberystwyth University
Penglais
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion SY23 3DB

Email nns@aber.ac.uk

Tel. 01970 621782

If you wish to advertise a position to our students, please contact the Industrial Year Administrator:

Industrial Year Administrator
Department of Computer Science
Aberystwyth University
Penglais
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion SY23 3DB

Email cs-iy-admin@aber.ac.uk

Tel. 01970 622424

Last updated 22nd October 2021