CS3001 Year in Industry and CS4001 Deferred Year in Industry
2016/17

Rules and Guidelines

1 Introduction

This booklet concerns Year in Industry programme in the Department of Computer Science (courses CS3001 Year in Industry and CS4001 Deferred Year in Industry); these courses are run and assessed along the same lines. CS3001 is for BSc and MSci students who take their placement at the end of year two and CS4001 is for MSci students who take their placement at the end of year three. It contains information on finding, choosing and securing a suitable placement, carrying out the placement, and producing the placement report for assessment.

The responsibility for choosing and securing a placement ultimately rests with the student. However, advice and structured support are provided at every stage by the College Careers Service. The Director of the Year in Industry programme in the CS Department can also be contacted at any stage of the process for advice. The supporting activities that are programmed aim to enable students to choose an appropriate placement, perform effectively in the various recruitment and selection activities that are part of the process of getting a placement, and gain as much as possible from the placement experience.

Whilst getting a placement can be seen as hard work (and is not easy), the skills and enhanced self-awareness that students will develop are fundamental to their future career.

1.1 Learning outcomes

Students who successfully complete their placement will have obtained:

- an understanding of the complexities and demands of the job application process;
- an understanding of recruitment priorities of employers;
- an understanding of the day-to-day running of a company;
- an insight into data handling and analysis skills required in business;
- experience of a range of practical work-based situations;
- improved technical skills and increased ability to evidence and demonstrate their skills to future employers.
2 Eligibility

All placements must be approved by the Director of the Year in Industry programme.

There are two essential conditions that must be satisfied for a student to go on a placement. Firstly, the programme Director will need to ascertain that the placement is appropriate for the programme of study and will be of sufficient educational value to the student. Secondly, the student needs to satisfy the Placement-progression requirements.

2.1 An appropriate placement

An appropriate placement should satisfy the following requirements:

- be relevant to the programme of study and provide the student with opportunities to meet the learning outcomes (see Section 1.1);
- be paid; whilst legally a UK placement can pay below the National Minimum Wage (see https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates) students are strongly advised not to accept unpaid placements;
- be a full-time role with a contract of employment (or similar);
- enable the student to engage in up to a year’s work;
- facilitate the completion of academic work and attendance of related events at the College;
- allow prearranged visits by the academic supervisor;
- provide an adequate supervision in the workplace;
- meet the requirement of the risk-assessment process;
- be based in the UK.

The placement normally starts immediately after the end of the Summer (Exams) term at Royal Holloway; see the College calendar for exact dates. The placement should last for up to 12 months and, in any case, finish by or before the end of the Summer term of the year after.

2.2 Progression requirements

The progression requirements aim to ensure that only students who have acquired the academic background and skills to engage effectively in work at a company or organisation, and therefore benefit from a placement, are allowed to progress to the placement.

The progression requirements are:
1. In order to progress to the placement, students must achieve a 65% combined average in the courses in the first year, with a minimum of 40% in each.

2. In order to progress to the placement, students must achieve a 65% combined average in the courses in the second year, with a minimum of 40% in each. Note that students who satisfy the first requirement should look for placements during the second year. However, their acceptance in the programme will be confirmed only after the Summer-term exams, when the results for the second year courses will become available.

3. In the case of students taking CS4001, to progress to the placement, students must achieve a 65% combined average in the courses in the second and third years, with a minimum of 40% in each.

3 Finding a placement

As mentioned at the start of this handbook, the responsibility for securing a placement ultimately rests with the student. However, the Department and College will organise visits from companies, placement fairs, and special workshops and one-to-one support to help students choose placements in roles that might suit their career ambitions and personal circumstances. In this section, we will give examples of other opportunities that are available, which students may pursue on their own initiative.

Please note that a placement is not a job — it is part of the degree and, as such, it needs to satisfy the requirements specified in Section 2.1. Although the placement in unlikely to be the dream job, experience shows that no matter what sort of placement a student completes, and whether they enjoy the placement or not, the year in industry enhances the student’s employability and likelihood to be successful in moving along any chosen career path.

Students who do not succeed in finding a placement must request a change of pathway to the three-year degree programme, in order to be enrolled on the correct course for their third year. Students should email the Faculty Administrator – Undergraduates and ask for a change of pathway form to be completed.

3.1 Placement lists

Many large companies have been offering placement opportunities for a while and have well-established recruitment processes. In most cases, the potential placement providers contact the Careers Service or the Director of the Year in Industry programme when they are ready to accept applications.

The student is strongly advised to approach prospective companies directly. However the student must make an effort to check first if their skills and qualifications are indeed relevant for the company.

Placement opportunities will be posted on the Careers page and, normally, communicated to the students via email as they arrive, with instructions on how to apply and/or links to the appropriate company webpages. It is not possible to issue a list of placement providers at the beginning of the year, as it is up to the companies when, and if, they advertise.
As more and more universities offer industry placements, there has been an increase in the number of companies publishing on-line placement lists. There will be many overlaps with the opportunities listed on the Careers site, but opportunities can be found on sites such as http://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/ or http://www.milkround.com.

If you want to know what it is like to work for a particular organisation, there are websites where employees can anonymously post their views of their employer and are therefore able to give an honest opinion. One example is www.glassdoor.co.uk. You can also talk to Computer Science students who are in their final year and who have completed a year-in-industry placement.

LinkedIn (https://uk.linkedin.com) is an excellent resource for developing professional contacts, as well as for job search. The Careers Service can help students to create a LinkedIn profile and advise on using LinkedIn to build networks and identify opportunities. There is a useful students’ guide (http://students.linkedin.com/uk) with video instructions for creating your profile and advice about what employers are looking for.

The Engineering Development Trust (EDT) (www.etrust.org.uk/) is a charity that, among other activities, finds placements for Year in Industry students. They have proved to be extremely helpful to our students over the past few years and have enabled them to gain placements with some of the top employers in the country. Students seeking year in industry placements are required to register with them. Details of the application process and interview dates will be circulated early in the autumn term. For more information, see: http://www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry.

Care should be taken when assessing these opportunities to ensure they meet placement requirements (see Section 2.1. Please note that a student must not sign a contract until the approval has been obtained from the Director of the Year in Industry programme.

3.2 Self-sourcing

A student who already has good contacts in the business world may want to make use of them in the search for a placement. If a contact works for an organisation that already offers placements the student can ask them if they can provide a reference or recommendation to support the application.

If the contact works for an organisation that has not previously offered a placement year, then the student could start discussing it with them, perhaps using the details provided in Section 2.1.

A student who wants to self-source a placement must have an initial discussion with the programme Director regarding the organisations they are considering talking to. The student should provide any background information they have relating to the company.

The main negotiations with a self-sourced placement provider will be carried out by the student. However, on occasion, there will be a need for the programme Director to contact the organisation directly. The student will be asked to provide appropriate contact details to facilitate this contact. The company should be prepared to discuss placement requirements with the programme Director.
3.3 Getting a placement approved

Students cannot accept a placement offer until the placement opportunity has been approved by the programme Director. Therefore, when a student gets to the contract stage, they should make an appointment to speak to the programme Director. The student is required to provide the programme Director with the potential future line manager in the company. The programme Director will then contact the potential line manager in order to check:

- the quality of opportunity and its relevance to the programme of study;
- the robustness of the company, i.e., how long it has been in business and its reputation;
- the suitability of location in terms of safety and advisor visits.

4 Application process

Placement recruitment processes follow the same patterns as regular graduate recruitment. Most placement providers will require an on-line application including a CV. They will also expect applicants to engage in any or all of the following:

- telephone interviews;
- online tests;
- face-to-face or Skype interviews;
- group assessment days.

Sessions will be available to help students to prepare for these processes. It is important that students should attend these sessions as the recruitment process is very competitive and knowing the tricks and techniques for the placement recruitment process will be invaluable.

Standard/template CVs or cut-and-paste on-line application form answers, sent off to all possible placement providers, are unlikely to be sufficient to secure a placement. Group-assessment days demand interpersonal skills that most students need to practice and company research is vital. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the available help and invest some time in preparing for each application/interview/assessment-day as well as possible. It is important that you tailor your applications and in particular, your covering letters, to the job and the organisation. In making these adjustments, do some research and look at their website.

An important point to note is that closing dates for applications can be misleading. Many organisations run a rolling programme of recruitment and so their closing dates for placement applications may be set far in the future. However, the organisation may be assessing applications as they come in and running interviews and
assessment days at regular intervals until they have filled all their positions. It is essential that students should apply early to secure a placement.

The main thing is do not give up. Applying for placements is time-consuming and you will need to be organised to ensure your studies don’t suffer. Don’t expect to get an offer from every organisation you apply to. If your application is not successful, ask for feedback and then act on it. If you feel you are not making progress, make an appointment with the Placements Officer or Careers Team to talk things through.

4.1 Events and support

Students are expected to attend careers workshops and events alongside regular studies. Some of those events will involve placement organisations, i.e., company representatives or current placement students. These are well worth attending even for students who do not intend to work for that particular company. Recruitment processes of many organisations are very similar and hints and tips are usually forthcoming at these events, either during the formal presentation, or afterwards when individuals’ questions are taken. Students should always use the opportunity to ask a question if they are thinking of applying to that particular organisation and note the name of the person spoken to so that it could be mentioned at an interview.

The Department of Computer Science and the College Careers Service run a number of activities throughout the year aimed at preparing students for employment and helping them to secure a placement. The activities include:

Advanced topics sessions run during term-time on Mondays at 4pm. The sessions involve talks by industry speakers on the use of big data in their companies and workshops organised by the Careers Service on practical issues such as writing a CV, interview skills, etc.

Careers fairs, which are organised to give students an opportunity to meet potential employers and placement hosts. All students on year-industry programmes should attend these events.

A compulsory briefing on placement health and safety/risk assessment. Failure to attend will mean that the student is not allowed to do a placement, as RHUL’s insurance cover will not be valid for the placement.

The programme Director or the Careers Service may require a student to also attend a one-to-one meeting to discuss progress and identify appropriate additional support, if required.

International students have the same opportunity to take up paid UK placements under the Tier 4 visa schemes. Royal Holloway’s support and advisory services’ webpage for International students can be found via the following link: https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/internation/support/home.aspx.

UKCISA, the UK Council for International Student Affairs, offers free advice for international students via their website http://www.ukcisa.org.uk.

The Department of Computer Science has a designated Placements Officer, Shirley Lunn, who provides administrative support, advertises placements and monitors students’ progress in applying for and gaining a placement. Students can contact her via email or phone (details in section 7 below) or arrange a 1:1 meeting to discuss any aspect of the placement process.
4.2 Help from academic advisors

Students are advised to discuss initial placement plans with their academic advisors. The advisor usually acts as a referee for placement applications. A reference letter is not normally required at the application stage; the referees are contacted if a placement offer is accepted. At the early stages of the application, students need to obtain permission to use their advisor’s name and contact details on the CV or application form.

Please note, however, that academic advisors are not trained careers professionals and are unable to provide detailed advice. For more specific support, students should book an appointment with the Careers Service.

4.3 Placement offer

Whilst many of the recruitment processes start in the Autumn, it is unlikely that an offer of employment will be issued before the Christmas break. In fact, it may be issued much later. The variability is due to when organisations choose to advertise, the speed of their HR processes, and sometimes how many placement students they are recruiting.

When a student gets a verbal or written offer, they should check all the details carefully, including pay/salary, dates of employment, actual location of role (not always the HQ or where applicants go for an interview). Students should consider practicalities such as commuting and accommodation. All concerns should be discussed with the programme Director before accepting the offer.

Bear in mind that many employers would consider it highly unprofessional to accept an offer and then continue to engage in other recruitment activities. It also reflects badly on the College and the Department.

Remember that a placement offer cannot be accepted before an approval has been obtained from the programme Director (see Section 2). The student should provide the programme Director with a copy of the contract or offer letter and the contacts of the potential line manager (see Section 2.1).

Please note that some contracts will be ‘Training Contracts’ rather than ‘Contracts of Employment’. This can mean that they contain a clause relating to the passing of professional examinations. Failing the examinations can lead to a termination of the placement.

4.4 Placement deadline

The deadline for notifying the programme Director that you have gained a placement is Friday 8th June. Placements cannot be approved if the student notifies the Director after this date.

4.5 Before you start your placement

Check you have a National Insurance number as you will need this to work. In the UK you normally receive one automatically at age 16 but for students who don’t already have one, more information can be found on the following website: https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number.

Check payment details. You will still need to pay fees to Royal Holloway during your placement year at a reduced rate of 20% of your usual full time tuition fees. Student Finance can discuss your options and offer guidance, via their email financialadvice@royalholloway.ac.uk or over the phone +44 (0)1784 276109.
5 On the placement

Departmental and College Careers Service staff work in collaboration with employers to ensure that each student gets the most from their year in industry.

5.1 Placement advisor

Each student on a placement is allocated a placement advisor. This can be the same person as the student’s academic advisor or may be a different person more experienced in industry collaborations.

The advisor monitors progression and is the first point of contact in the College if the student is unhappy with anything concerning the placement.

The advisor would normally visit the student twice at the location of the placement, depending on the location of the placement. The main purpose of the visits is to make sure that the placement proceeds as agreed and the job tasks undertaken by the student are of sufficient educational value.

During the visits the advisor would normally have three separate (short) meetings:

- one meeting including the line manager and the student, in which the student will present his/her work so far;
- one meeting with the student alone, to discuss the experience the student is having and possible concerns, if any;
- one meeting with the line manager alone, to discuss the student performance.

At the end of each visit, the line manager together with the placement advisor, will fill in an evaluation form (Annex 1), assessing the performance of the students. These forms constitute part of the final mark for the course (see section 6).

5.2 Guidance for employers

During the placement, the employer should follow these guidelines.

- Employers should designate one member of their staff to serve as the Placement Supervisor and as a point of contact with the Department. If that member of staff changes, the programme Director should be informed accordingly.
- Employers should ensure that Health and Safety regulations are complied with during the placement, and should organise appropriate training and induction sessions at the start of the placement.
- Employers should be aware that a student’s work must have reasonable educational value, and that the student is required to submit a written report on this work to be assessed as part of the overall undergraduate degree.
At the end of the placement the employer should submit to the student’s placement adviser, a report to be taken into account in the College’s formal assessment of the work done by the student.

5.4 Student status and enrolment

As in previous years, you will need to enrol online during the summer. During your year in industry you will still be considered a full-time student, so you are entitled to the usual student discounts, NUS membership, student railcard, etc. You will also continue to be exempt from Council Tax. You will need a Council Tax exemption form, which you can download by logging onto Campus Connect and selecting the Enrolment tab, where you will be able to download a copy of your certificate.

6 Assessment

Students must submit for assessment a report on their industrial placement. The deadline for submitting the report is October 31 of the calendar year in which the placement ends. The placement report will be marked and the mark will count towards 80% of the individual project mark.

The guideline for the size of the report is 2500–4000 words. The report should normally contain the following sections:

- Introduction to the company or organisation where the placement was held;
- Aims and objectives of the work and projects undertaken;
- Description of work and projects undertaken.
- Summary of what the student has learned in terms of skills and experience

Students should add a final conclusion section giving a short statement about their overall experience on the placement.

The company or organisation employing the student will normally provide a report on the student’s work and the report will also be taken into account by the markers (see section 5.2).

The student’s report will be marked by the placement advisor and another academic member of the department. In the event of a small discrepancy (less than 10%) the marks will be averaged with a two-to-one weighting towards the placement advisor’s mark. In the event of a larger discrepancy, a third independent marker will mark the report, and the programme Director shall seek agreement amongst all markers as the final outcome.

Markers will mark according to the following scheme and will justify marks with a short paragraph on the form. The final mark for this course consists of four components. The first component will be assessed during the visits (20% of the final mark) and the second component assessed from the final report (80% of the final mark). In details:
- Engagement and performance (20% of the mark) – how well the student has engaged with the company and his/her performance as assessed by the placement advisor and the line manager during the visits through the questionnaires (Annex 1).

- learning (30% of the mark) – how much the students has learned both in terms of skills and experience, as assessed from the report

- achievements (30% of the mark) – what the student actually achieved during the placement, as assessed from the report

- Writing up (20% of the mark) – the style and clarity of the report, as assessed from the report

The marking penalty for late submission of the report is 10% of the agreed mark for a project submitted within 24 hours of deadline. After 24 hours no project will be accepted and a mark of Incomplete will be given.
7. Contacts

Professor Alberto Paccanaro
- Careers/YINI Director
  alberto.paccanaro@rhul.ac.uk

Shirley Lunn  +44(0)1784 414212
- Placements Officer
  placement@cs.rhul.ac.uk

Jenna Sparkes
- Department Manager
  jenna.sparkes@rhul.ac.uk

Elaine Marshall
- Faculty Administrator – Undergraduates
  elaine.marshall@rhul.ac.uk

Royal Holloway Careers Service
  careers@royalholloway.ac.uk

Student Support  +44 (0)1784 276473
  welfare@royalholloway.ac.uk

Student Services  +44 (0)1784 276641
  student-enquiries@royalholloway.ac.uk

International Student Support  +44(0)1784 44366
  internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk

Student Financial Advice  +44(0)1784 276109
  financialadvice@royalholloway.ac.uk

Students’ Union  +44(0)1784 276700

College Switchboard  +44(0)1784 434455

Security (24 hour Emergency contact)  +44(0)1784 443063

General Advice

Citizen’s Advice Bureau
  www.adviceguide.org.uk

 Foreign and Commonwealth Office
  www.fco.gov.uk

 HM Revenue and Customs  +44(0)845 367825
  www.hmrc.gov.uk

 National Insurance Office  +44(0)845 6000643
  www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number
Annex 1

FORM FOR VISITS TO YINI STUDENTS

Student Name:  
Line manager name:  
Company:  
Academic Advisor for the placement:  

Please enter an integer value between 1 and 5, with 1 meaning “strongly disagree” and 5 meaning “strongly agree”:

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<td>The student is motivated</td>
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<td>The student is well organized</td>
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<td>The student works well as part of a team</td>
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<td>The student engages well with the organization</td>
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<td>The student has developed an understanding of the day-to-day running of the company</td>
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<td>The student has the ability to deal with new challenges</td>
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<td>The student has good presentation/communication skills</td>
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<td>The students has improved his/her technical skills</td>
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<td>If there was a possibility, the company would offer a job to the student (second visit only)</td>
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List some technical skills that the student has learned/improved during the placement:

Write a brief comment on the student performance:

Date: