



YEAR IN INDUSTRY

SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND DIGITAL ARTS

Canterbury

WHY TAKE A YEAR IN INDUSTRY?

As a student in the School of Engineering and Digital Arts, you are encouraged to take a year in industry as part of your degree.

A year in industry gives you the opportunity to work in a real-life, business environment related to your programme of study. During the placement you can see for yourself how the technologies you are studying at Kent are put to use in companies and organisations.

You can do the year in industry if you are studying one of the following degrees:

- Bioengineering (BEng)
- Computer Systems Engineering (BEng/MEng)
- Digital Arts (BA/MArt)
- Multimedia Technology and Design (BSc)
- Electronic and Communications Engineering (BEng/MEng).

Over half of our students choose this option every year. To read about previous students' experiences, see p6 and p7.

Finding a placement

Students spend their year in industry with small to medium size companies ranging, through to global organisations. We have established links with many companies in the south-east and across the UK. Some students on digital media placements have found work abroad, in countries such as Japan, Germany, Holland, Luxembourg and Spain.

Top ten benefits

Experience has shown that the year in industry is highly beneficial to our students.

It can help you to:

- put the knowledge gained at university into practice in the real world
- experience life in the workplace and gain some of the organisational and management skills that can only be learnt in employment
- earn money (the average placement salary outside London was £16,700 in 2013/14; in London the average was £17,500)
- improve your employment prospects
- try out a potential career path
- gain first-hand experience of the recruitment and interview process
- get a better degree (ASET, the professional body that promotes work-based learning, found that students who take a year in industry are more likely to achieve a first or 2.1 than those on three-year degrees)
- use the knowledge gained on placement for your final-year project
- have fun, meet new people and network with industry experts
- greatly increase your chances of being offered a graduate job within your placement company.

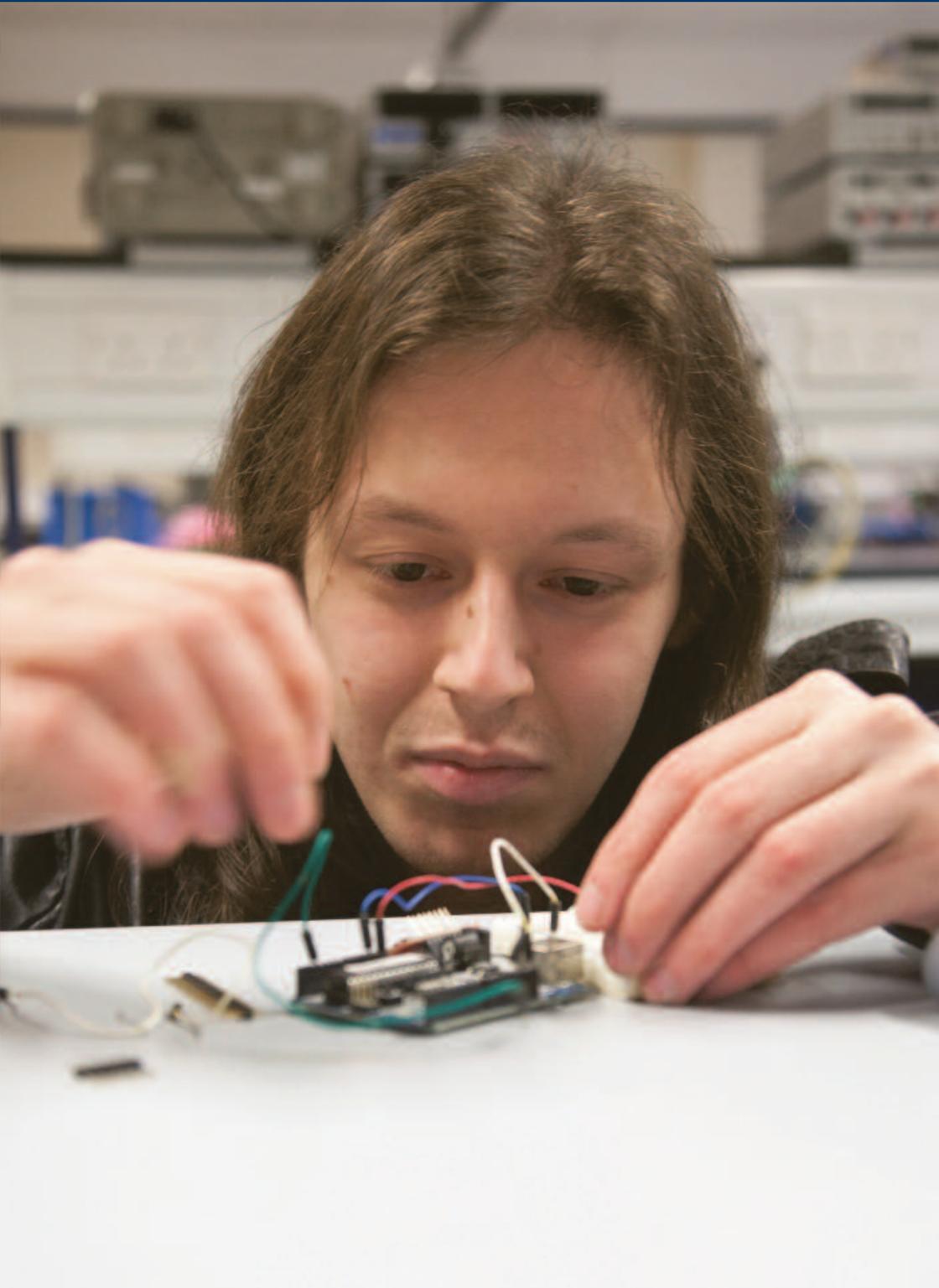
Sponsored students

Kent also offers a Sponsored Student Scheme, open to our first-year students. Typically, a sponsored student works with the company during vacations and also for a one-year work placement before the final year of study.

The Sponsored Student Scheme provides a sustained, long-term engagement between a student and a company. The student receives financial support, valuable experience and potentially a job with the company after graduation.

“I'd never had a job before. It was definitely different from the student experience. It got me into a routine, which has helped me a lot in my final year of studying. I learned a lot of practical skills too, such as communication skills.”

Michael Robins
Electronics and Communications Engineering with a Year in Industry



HOW YOUR YEAR IN INDUSTRY WORKS

The year in industry forms an integral part of your degree and takes place after the second and third years of study.

The School of Engineering and Digital Arts has a dedicated Employability Officer to help you secure a suitable and interesting position. The Employability Officer advertises numerous placements every year and there are also employer presentations on campus. You learn how to write applications for placements and do mock interviews with the help of the Careers and Employability Service.



Typical placements

Students on engineering placements usually spend their year in industry with manufacturing companies, or in the electronics departments of industrial, commercial or public service organisations. Most students in Digital Arts or Multimedia Technology and Design, spend their year in industry working within the creative industries.

During your placement

During your placement, we stay in contact with you via email and telephone. You receive at least one visit from Employability Office staff in your place of work. This level of support ensures that you get the most from your placement (and exceeds that offered by most other universities).

During the employment period, you keep a record of your activities and at the end of the placement year you write an assessed report. Your employer is also involved in the assessment process and completes a performance evaluation.

After your placement

The skills gained are extremely useful during your final year of study and can help you achieve an excellent degree result. Some students continue to collaborate with their employer by basing their final-year project on work they did during their placement.

After graduation

Employers are always keen to employ graduates with knowledge of the work environment and some students receive job offers from their placement company.

“It was hard work, but I learnt more during that year than at any other time in my life: how to interact in a work environment, how to stay motivated and how to maintain a good work-life balance. My technical skills improved too; the placement definitely solidified everything I had learned.”

Francesca Haselden
Multimedia Technology and Design
with a Year in Industry



STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Damien Theuveny studied for a BSc (Hons) in Multimedia Technology and Design with a Year in Industry.

How did you go about finding a placement?

I really wanted to work abroad so I applied for a few placements in Europe and one of them was at Eurocontrol in Luxembourg. The School helped me prepare for the most common questions and co-ordinated the interview. I had a preliminary interview on the phone where Eurocontrol outlined what I'd be expected to do and what I'd get back from them. For the next telephone interview, I did a presentation using desktop sharing and got the job.

Can you describe the company you were working for?

The company deals with planes, airports, regulations, flight planning

– that sort of thing. They have several offices and the institute in Luxembourg is for training; it provides courses for people getting into the industry – for air traffic controllers and airport staff.

How quickly did you settle in when you arrived?

The School already had another placement student there, so when I arrived, she showed me around and made sure that I knew who was who.

What was your role?

I was putting the courses online – taking existing teaching modules and updating them. For instance, air traffic controllers need to know performance details: what speed a plane is capable of, what altitude it can fly at, and so on. I was interacting with people who knew the subject matter well: they'd map out what needed to be taught at each stage. There's a lot you can do with e-learning, especially if you're

using animations. We always tried to avoid relying on plain text.

How did the skills you gained at university help?

In the first year at Kent, we had to make an interactive website – we'd look at outdated sites and redesign them, so that was really useful. In my second year at Kent, I did a Flash portfolio and it was good to have that knowledge. I studied Java and JavaScript too, and those coding skills came in useful: HTML, CSS, JavaScript; I used them all.

What skills did you develop?

The job involved a lot of project planning – overseeing everything and making sure it came together. You have to define the brief yourself, so you need to predict what the constraints will be. And my web development skills improved too. I learnt so many different things – you learn as you go.

How has it helped your career?

The company uses a lot of contractors and one of them asked me whether I'd be interested in working with him when I graduate. So that's very helpful. I'd be doing web development, and because most of his work is for Eurocontrol, I'd be on familiar ground.

Would you recommend the year in industry?

Yes, absolutely. There's so much you can learn from it.

Damien worked in the training division of Eurocontrol, www.eurocontrol.int/training



Tonie Griffith studied for a BSc (Hons) in Computer Systems Engineering with a Year in Industry.

How did you go about finding a placement?

The School provided information on all the placements available – the one I took was the first one I applied for, at Buckman Hardy Associates in Deal. The reason I chose the company was because they did a lot of embedded systems and Java programming, which was what I wanted to do.

How quickly did you settle in when you arrived?

We had a handover period when the placement student from the previous year was still around – his last week was my first week, so that helped a bit. I started on a project in the first week and there were lots of new things to learn. It was exciting!

What sort of work were you doing?

Buckman Hardy Associates do all kinds of projects for every kind of client, from power companies to balloon companies. It was very hands-on. One project was to work on a port analyser for the astronomy branch of the company, AWR Technology. The port analyser calibrates the telescope so, if you've programmed it correctly, you can find a particular star. There was a user interface, buttons to program, LEDs that worked differently depending on the settings – all sorts of fun stuff!



Another project was to create a multimeter. I was able to work on every aspect of it – from the specification to the circuit design, tracking the components, getting them soldered on, programming, client meetings, documentation...

Did the skills you gained in your first two years of studying help?

Yes, I'd be learning how to do something and then I'd remember that we did it in a lecture. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to take the year in industry, to get that kind of 'real-life' experience.

What particular skills did you develop during your year?

It's a small company, so I could get involved in whatever I was interested in. I got a lot of exposure to everything. I gained interpersonal skills too, especially how to communicate with a customer. It was great for my confidence. At the end of the year I had a holiday booked, but I didn't want to leave because I was having so much fun.

How did it affect your last year of studying at Kent?

I used my brain so much during that year and when I came back to Kent, it definitely helped. In my final year, some of the topics covered in the lectures were things I'd done in my year in industry. I was more familiar with what we were learning. And having a year's salary behind me made a big difference too.

What about your career plans?

I was so happy during that year, but I wasn't expecting a job offer because it's such a small company. Then a colleague said to me towards the end of my placement: 'They're very impressed with you.' And, yes, I was offered a job!

Tonie worked for Buckman Hardy Associates, www.buckman-hardy.co.uk and its partner company AWR Technology, www.awrtech.co.uk

TO FIND OUT MORE

For more details on the year in industry,
please visit our School's website or
contact our Employability Officer.

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