Cardiff University
School of Computer Science & Informatics

Student Professional Placement Year (SPPY) Handbook

For BSc Programmes with Year in Industry:

- BSc Business Information Systems
- BSc Computer Science
- BSc Computer Science with High Performance Computing
- BSc Computer Science with Security and Forensics
- BSc Computer Science with Visual Computing
- BSc Joint Honours Computing and Mathematics
- BSc Software Engineering
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Acknowledgement

This handbook is based on the Cardiff School of Physics & Astronomy placement handbook.
1. Introduction

The aim of the Placement is to provide students with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience as part of their undergraduate degree programme. The placement will normally last between 9 and 12 months and will take place between Year 2 and the Final Year of your programme. It is expected that students on placements will be paid by the Placement provider for the duration of the placement.

1.1 Finding a Placement

You are responsible for finding your own placement, but the School is using placement consultants, Symmons Madge Associates Ltd, to inform students of suitable placement opportunities. The School does not guarantee that a placement can be found for all students. We therefore strongly encourage you to look for placement opportunities yourself, as well as responding to the opportunities that will be presented via the placement consultants. Many companies only consider students for their placements through on-line recruitment via their web-pages.

A series of workshops and talks will be provided by our placement consultants in the Autumn Semester in Year 2 to give you advice on finding and applying for a placement and on developing skills to help you get the most from your placement opportunity.

You need to update your CV and send it to Symmons Madge at the start of the Autumn Semester in Year 2. Once your CV has been approved you will be sent opportunities for placements that you can apply to if you are interested.

The University's Careers and Employability service also offers good advice on finding work placements. A good place to start is the Career Central resource provided by through the Careers and Employability web pages. This has a Work Experience section that includes a list of work experience web-sites that can be a useful starting point in finding your placement. The Career Central website can be found at:

https://careercentral.cardiff.ac.uk  (login with a Cardiff username and password)

The School will ensure that the placement conforms to the University’s Code of Practice on Study Away from the University.

1.2 Eligibility and Progression

You must achieve at least 100 credits and obtain an average of at least 50% in Year 1 to proceed to Year 2 of your programme with a Year in Industry. If you do not meet this requirement then you will be required to transfer to the three year version of your programme.

You must achieve a minimum of 100 second year (level 4) credits, giving you a total of at least 220 credits to proceed to the placement year. You are allowed to start your placement any time during the summer after confirmation that you can proceed to the placement year. You will need to finish your placement period before the enrolment week of your Final Year.

Students who proceed to the placement year after the June Exam Board but have 10 or 20 credits to resit can start their placement, but are expected to do their resits over the summer of that year.

Students who fail to proceed to the placement year after the June Exam Board but
are given resits to do over the summer may not start their placement until they have confirmation that they have successfully proceeded to the placement year after the Resit Exam Board held at the start of September.

If you have not been able to find a suitable placement by the enrolment week following your Year 2 results then you will need to transfer to the three year version of your programme.

Students who are allowed to carry modules as external candidates into the next year (10 or 20 credits) will be expected to retake their outstanding modules at the next opportunity. Students carrying modules with Autumn Exams will need to take their resit/s in the Autumn Exam period whilst they are on placement. Students carrying modules with Spring Exams will need to take their resit/s in the Spring Exam period whilst they are on placement. Students carrying modules with coursework will be informed of the arrangements for recovering the coursework whilst they are on placement.

The placement year will contribute 10% towards your final degree classification (with year 2 contributing 20%, and the final year contributing 70%).

2. Aims and Benefits of the Student Professional Placement Year (SPPY)

SPPY is widely respected by software development companies, consultancy firms, IT departments, health authorities, local authorities, government departments, the service industry and professional bodies such as the BCS – The Chartered Institute for IT. Employers recognise the mutual benefits to be gained by giving students the chance to learn within a working environment before they graduate and begin their career. Many students secure their first full-time employment as a result of their performance during a Student Professional Placement Year.

Where supervised work experience is an integral part of an undergraduate programme it affords the opportunity to gain a more balanced perspective of the profession. The main benefits you will gain from a well-balanced and effective SPPY period are the:

1. opportunity of a break in your academic studies,
2. chance to earn money in order to reduce your student financial commitment,
3. opportunity to get a taste of the world of work
4. enhanced prospects of employment upon graduation and potential for speedier promotion,
5. development of your awareness of the link between academic and practical skills,
6. broadening of your appreciation of the breadth and depth of the workplace,
7. extension of your self-confidence and promotion of your self-awareness,
8. improvement of your understanding of health and safety issues relating to yourself and others,
9. development of your teamwork skills,
10. appreciation of the importance of effective management of human, financial and physical resources,
11. evolution of your oral and written communication skills in a variety of situations,
12. development of your problem solving skills and initiative,
13. acquisition of a professional way of working and acceptance of responsibility for your actions,
14. potential opportunity to build on knowledge and skills gained on placement in your final year project
15. provision of the opportunity to fulfil aspects of the professional training core objectives thereby shortening the time needed after graduation to become professionally qualified.

3. University Requirements

1. Period of Training: normally there will be one period of SPPY commencing after you have met the progression requirements for Year 2. The placement should normally extend over a period of 9-12 months.

2. Preparation during Year 2: you will be expected to complete all aspects of the SPPY student development programme during your second year – particularly important are the early preparation of your CV, and attendance at the compulsory Health & Safety Awareness lecture.

3. SPPY Record: you will be expected to regularly review, record and evaluate your progress on your placement in your SPPY Record. This should be sent to your SPPY Tutor one week before each visit and uploaded onto Learning Central eight months after the start of your placement. Your SPPY Record will be assessed by your SPPY Tutor and is worth 15% of your marks for this module.

4. University Assessment Visits: students working in the UK will be visited on at least two occasions during your placement by your SPPY Tutor. The first visit is normally about 3 months after your start date and the second visit is normally about 7 months after your start date. Your Work-based Supervisor will complete an assessment of your performance up to the time of each visit on forms M2 and M3. You should complete form M4 in time for each visit. These should be submitted to Learning Central a week before each visit. Other arrangements are made for students working outside the UK.

5. Initial Reflective Report: you will need to submit your first reflective report 4 months after your start date. This will be marked by the Module Leader and is worth 25% of your marks for this module. Further details are given in Section 5.

6. Final Reflective Report: the Final Reflective Report is submitted one year after your start date or by 1st September before you start your final year (whichever is the soonest). This report covers the period from month 5 to month 12. Your Work-based Supervisor should complete forms M2, M3 & M5 two weeks before you submit your report so their comments can be included in your evaluation. You should submit these forms when you submit your report. The Final Reflective Report will be assessed by your SPPY Tutor and an academic member of staff. It is worth 50% of your marks for the module. Further details are given in Section 5.

7. Poster Presentation: You will be expected to make a poster about your SPPY period and attend a poster presentation session in enrolment week. The
presentation will be marked by an Assessment Panel. It is worth 10% of your marks for the module

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Student

The Student's first duty is to the Placement Provider (defined herein). Students should also be aware that they are representing Cardiff University and the School of Computer Science & Informatics.

As a placement student you should:

• Ensure that you understand and act within your Placement Provider’s rules and regulations in all areas, and specifically with respect to confidentiality, responsibilities, inter-personal relationships, and Health and Safety.
• Work in a team and/or as an individual as directed towards agreed goals and in a timely manner.
• Apply your academic knowledge to the tasks you are working on and show initiative.
• Engage fully in your placement experience to ensure you are able to make the most of your placement period and maximise your potential.
• Realise that there may be some times when the Placement Provider will wish you to do work not directly related to your main task/s.
• Record your work appropriately in your SPPY Record, and submit reports by the specified deadlines.
• Be frank about any shortcomings in your work, and reflect on the accuracy, reliability, and significance of the outcomes.
• Ensure that you understand the role of your Work-based Supervisor (see glossary)
• Ensure that you understand the role of your SPPY Tutor (see glossary).
• Be involved in regularly discussing your progress through the Placement with your Work-based Supervisor.
• Ask to have information clarified and/or re-confirmed if you are not sure.
• Check you are clear about your responsibilities, work objectives and tasks when they are assigned by your Work-based Supervisor
• Conform to normal Placement Provider hours of attendance.
• Be aware of your rights to a safe workplace environment.
• Be aware of local safety regulations and the University’s guidelines in the Code of Practice on Placement Learning which can be found at: http://learning.cf.ac.uk/curriculum-design/code-of-practice-on-placement-learning/
• Be aware of your rights to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation for the workplace.
• Maintain contact with the University throughout the placement period
• Inform your SPPY Tutor and your Work-based Supervisor of any issues that
arise in the course of the placement. If these are likely to affect your progress on the placement then you should also inform the Module Leader.

4.2 Placement Consultants

The School is working with Placement Consultants at Symmons Madge Associates Ltd (http://www.symmonsmadge.co.uk) to deliver the workshop programme and support the operation and assessment of our undergraduate and postgraduate placement modules.

The Placement Consultants are responsible for ensuring placements that each student obtains are suitable for the purposes of the student’s programme of study. The Placement Consultants should ensure that the students will be employed in a challenging professional environment which will allow them to satisfy the placement learning outcomes. This may be achieved through visits or telephone communication with the Placement Provider.

The Placement Consultants will check that each Placement Provider has provided the student with a Work-based Supervisor who will maintain effective mentoring and supervision. The Work-based Supervisor should meet regularly with the student to set work objectives, monitor progress, and provide guidance. The Work-based Supervisor will also provide reports on the student’s progress for each of the two visits and at the end of the placement.

The Placement Consultants will appoint an SPPY Tutor for each student. The SPPY Tutor will check the student’s progress and liaise with their employer, on two occasions during the placement period. The SPPY Tutor will also be involved with the assessment of the student’s SPPY Record, final reflective report and presentation.

In addition, the Placement Consultant(s) will:

- At the beginning of the Autumn Semester provide a presentation to Year 2 students explaining the Placement Programme and the advantages gained from choosing it.
- Deliver a series of weekly tutorials during the Autumn Semester covering the essentials for acquiring a placement, i.e. CV writing, interview skills, team role identification etc.
- Provide 1-hour drop in sessions for students to discuss any issues or concerns.
- Deliver up to two separate Health & Safety lectures. Note: Attendance at one of the H&S lectures is compulsory for ALL students.
- Review, comment on and where appropriate correct student CVs.
- Contact and liaise with prospective employers.
- Email/phone/communicate placement opportunities to students and responding to student email/phone calls etc.
- Provide prospective employers with suitable CVs or where applicable direct students to online application processes.
- When appropriate/necessary arrange interviews.
- Contact employers to obtain the result of interviews and when possible obtain detailed feedback.
• Manage the subsequent selection/appointment process.
• Raise any concerns with the employer or student as appropriate.
• As appropriate maintain contact with students during their placement.
• On return of the students to University (having completed their Placement) attend and comment on their poster presentations.

4.3 Module Leader

The Module leader will oversee the module and ensure that close ties are maintained with the Placement Consultants and Placement Provider to ensure smooth running of each placement.

Module leader will:

• Ensure that the Placement module provides a programme of learning that will enable students to develop and document their professional skills and knowledge
• Set the coursework and feedback forms for all assessments on the placement.
• Ensure that students are provided with details of each assessment and appropriate feedback forms.
• Work with the student, SPPY Tutor and Work-based Supervisor to try to resolve concerns raised by the student or employer. The Module Leader will also be involved in the re-assessment of the progress report where students have failed to make sufficient progress.
• Provide feedback and marks for the initial reflective report.
• Ensure that an appropriate Academic member of staff is involved in marking the final reflective report for each student.
• Ensure that an appropriate Academic member of staff is involved in marking the poster presentation for each student.
5. Assessment during the Placement

5.1 Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes for this module are:

On Completion of this module a Student will be able to:

• Review, record and evaluate their progress against a pre-defined set of objectives.

• Reflect on how they have developed their technical and/or professional skills and discuss how these will contribute to their on-going professional development.

• Demonstrate achievement against a range of pre-defined personal and employability skills: Commercial Awareness, Teamwork Skills, Communication Skills, Influence and Leadership, Problem Solving Skills, Task Management, Self-Confidence and Self Awareness, Appreciation of Legal, Ethical and Professional Issues, Awareness of links between Theory and Practice.

You are required to complete the following assessments to address the Learning Outcomes:

• An Initial Reflective Report which will count 25% towards the final mark. It is due four months after your start date.

• Your SPPY Record which will count 15% towards the final mark. It is due eight months after your start date.

• A Final Reflective Report which will count 50% towards the final mark. It is due one year after your start date (or by 1st September if that is earlier).

• A poster about your placement that will be presented to students, staff and employers following the placement. This will count 10% towards the final mark and will be held during enrolment week.

Your SPPY Record and assessments should not contain confidential or sensitive information so please make sure you check with your Work-based Supervisor to what extent you are able to include project information and work deliverables in your assessments.

5.2 SPPY Record

Whilst on placement you are expected to keep a log of your experience during the placement. An SPPY Record has been developed to help you do this. You will also use your SPPY Record to regularly plan, record and evaluate your performance on placement against the work objectives set by your Work-based Supervisor, objectives for developing your IT Professional Skills and the predefined Personal and Employability development objectives set by the University.

You need to set objectives at the start of your placement and at four months and eight months into your placement. You should record your progress against these
objectives at the end of each week. Each month you should review your progress against these objectives. Further details are provided in your SPPY Record.

The Personal and Employability Development Objectives are set by the University as a series of questions to help you demonstrate achievement against a range of skills.

The Personal and Employability Development Objectives cover:
• Commercial Awareness
• Teamwork Skills
• Communication Skills
• Influence and Leadership
• Problem Solving Skills
• Task Management
• Self-confidence & Self Awareness Skills
• Awareness of Legal, Ethical & Professional Issues
• Awareness of links between Theory and Practice

Your electronic SPPY Record contains standard response forms for the full set of questions relating to the above areas.

5.3 Initial Reflective Report

The Initial Reflective Report should be a summary of your progress made during the first four months of your placement. The report should typically be 2500-3500 words.

You will be provided with a coursework specification and a copy of the marking criteria that will be used by your assessor before you start the placement.

In the report you will need to address the following:

i) Placement Overview
   You should provide a short overview of your placement organisation, the sections/departments/teams you have worked for and your roles, duties and responsibilities whilst on placement.

ii) Development of Professional IT Skills

   • A critical evaluation of the progress you have made since the start of the placement against the work objectives set by your Work-based Supervisor. This should include one interesting reflective example of an achievement in the first four months;

   • An overview of how you are progressing as an IT Professional that discusses how you have developed your professional skills since the start of the placement in one or more of the Professional IT Skills from the SFIA framework (see Appendix 2). This should include two interesting reflective examples of how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills whilst on placement through meeting the work objectives set by the Placement Provider
iii) Development of Personal and Employability Skills

- A critical evaluation of the progress you have made since the start of the placement against the Personal and Employability Development Objectives set by the University. This should include four interesting reflective examples to show how you have developed your personal and employability skills though the satisfaction of the pre-defined development objectives in your SPPY Record.

The initial reflective report will be assessed by the Module Leader or another academic member of staff.

5.4 Progress Review

If your Work-based Supervisor has concerns about your progress at any time during the placement this should be raised with your SPPY Tutor before the visit. If you have concerns about your placement, your Work-based Supervisor or any other circumstances that might affect your progress on the placement then you should raise this with your SPPY Tutor and Module Leader as soon as possible.

The Placement Provider and the School both need to be satisfied that you are making sufficient progress to successfully complete the placement. Your progress will be formally reviewed on each of the two visits by your SPPY Tutor. You should submit your SPPY Record to Learning Central one week before each visit. Your Work-based Supervisor will also complete an assessment of your performance before each visit (using forms M2 and M3 provided in the administration forms on Learning Central). You should make sure you have received a copy of the completed forms from your Work Based Supervisor. You will need to upload the M2 and M3 forms to Learning Central one week before each visit.

If your SPPY Tutor and your Work-based Supervisor decide that you are not making sufficient progress to successfully complete the placement then normally a further assessment will be arranged.

This will involve:

- Agreeing a timeframe for you to show sufficient improvement (normally between 1-2 months);
- Agreeing clear objectives that you need to meet during this timeframe to show improvement in your performance;
- You submitting a further progress report at the end of this timeframe that critically evaluates your progress against these objectives. This should be sent to your SPPY Tutor, your Work-based Supervisor and the Module Leader;
- Your SPPY Tutor and your Work-based Supervisor will formally review your progress within this timeframe. If you fail to satisfy the SPPY Tutor, Work-based Supervisor and Module Leader that you have made sufficient improvement then normally you will be required to leave the placement.

5.5 Final Reflective Report

The Final Reflective Report covers the period from the start of month 5 to the end of month 12 (or the end of the placement if the period is less than one year). You should submit your report one year after your start date (or by 1st September if that is earlier). The report is worth 50% of the final mark.
A summary of the requirements for the report follows:

i) **Placement Update**
You should provide an overview of your placement organisation and its main areas of activity. You should discuss how the tasks of the sections/departments/teams you have worked for contribute to meeting the organisation’s objectives. You should also outline your roles, duties and responsibilities whilst on placement.

ii) **Development of Professional IT Skills**
You should critically evaluate your progress and provide a range of reflective examples that discuss your main achievements since submitting the initial report to satisfy the main work objectives set by your Work-based Supervisor. You should also provide a range of reflective examples that clearly demonstrate how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills one or more relevant Professional IT Skills from the SFIA framework (see Appendix 2). You should also discuss how your achievements and improved technical and/or professional skills will contribute to your on-going professional development.

iii) **Development of Personal and Employability Skills**
You should critically evaluate your progress and provide a range of reflective examples to show how you have developed your personal and employability skills since submitting the initial report through satisfying the Personal and Employability Development Objectives (see Section 5.2) set by the University. You should also discuss how your improved personal and employability skills will contribute to your on-going professional development.

The guidance for the size of the report is between 7,000 and 8,000 words. The report will be marked by your SPPY Tutor and a member of academic staff. You will be provided a copy of the coursework specification and the marking criteria that will use to mark your report.

At the end of the placement your Work-based Supervisor will be asked to comment on your performance since the last review and will complete forms M2, M3. S/he will be asked to verify that you have completed the work placement to the satisfaction of the Placement Provider using form M5. These forms should be uploaded on Learning Central at the same time as you submit your Final Reflective Report. Your evaluations in Sections ii) and iii) of the final reflective report should take into account the feedback from your Work-Based Supervisor/s and discuss how their views of your progress have altered during your placement. The mark for the final report may be adjusted if you claim to have met objectives which have not been satisfied according to your Work-based Supervisor’s assessment.

5.6 **Poster Presentation**
You will need to develop a poster about your placement that will be presented in a poster session during enrolment week. You will get the opportunity to discuss your poster with members of staff from the School, students wishing to take the placement, your fellow placement students and staff from the Placement Providers who wish to attend.
The poster should address the following:

- You should provide a concise overview of your placement organisation. You should also outline your main roles and responsibilities during the placement.

- You should provide a concise overview of your achievements and provide an interesting example of one of your main achievements.

- You should provide a concise overview of your progress in developing your SFIA Professional IT skills with one interesting example of how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills in one of these Professional IT skills whilst on placement.

- You should provide a concise overview of your progress in developing your Personal and Employability Skills with an interesting example of how you developed TWO of these skills.

- You should give advice for students starting placements next summer and this can cover both obtaining a placement, and what students should do whilst on placement.

Your poster will be marked by the Assessment Panel on how well you have addressed the points above, the quality of your poster presentation, creativity and imagination shown in the design of poster and the writing style used.

5.7 Reassessment

Students who fail to successfully complete the placement to the satisfaction of the placement provider and the School may be given the opportunity of taking a further placement subject to the agreement of the examination board, providing that the student has obtained a suitable second placement.

Students who fail the assessment but have made satisfactory progress with their employers during the placement will be given a further opportunity for resubmission of a reflective report.
6. **Guidance Notes on writing your Reflective Reports**

1. The initial reflective report and final reflective report should NOT read like a diary. It will help the marker if they are structured with the same section headings as given in the assessment.

2. If your work is of a confidential or sensitive nature then you need to focus on skills or discuss your work in a more generic way rather than giving specific details about the nature of your work. If you need time to get security clearance or there are sections of the report that you will not be able to cover then get in touch with the Module Leader as appropriate adjustments can be made in these circumstances.

3. You do not need to cover everything you have done on placement in your reflective reports. Your critical evaluations should SUMMARISE the main things you have done and evaluate how well you think you are progressing by discussing your main strengths and weaknesses without going into too much description about the nature of the work. The SPPY Record will record the breadth of your work.

4. The critical evaluation in the final reflective report should take into account the feedback from your Work-Based Supervisor/s and discuss how their views of your progress have altered during your placement.

5. The reflective examples give you the opportunity to look at certain aspects of your work in more depth, but focus on making these reflective so they highlight the significance and interesting aspect of the example and what you have learnt rather than describing what you have done.

6. You should be keeping a weekly log of your progress in your SPPY Record. This is likely to have many potential examples that you could include in your reflective reports. You need to focus on the more interesting and/or significant examples that give the best opportunity for reflection.

7. If you are providing examples of developing your Professional IT Skills make sure you explicitly address specific component/s of an IT Professional Skill at the appropriate level. You need to particularly focus on the difference between the levels if you want to show progress in a skill in your critical evaluation.

8. The generic descriptors in the SFIA framework may help you choose an effective set of reflective examples that will show:
   - your level of autonomy & responsibility in carrying out the task including your involvement in the decision making
   - your level of influence with team members & other stakeholders
   - the level of complexity of the task & how you tackled this complexity
   - the level of business skills required to carry out the task (although most of these are more relevant for finding good examples for personal and employability skills)

You don't need to cover all areas in each example but make sure you highlight the above points where they are relevant. Focus on the ones that more clearly demonstrate you are working at SFIA level 3 (or above). See Appendix 2 for further advice on using the SFIA framework during your placement.
9. Other ways to make your examples are more reflective include:
   • evaluate the effectiveness of methods, tools and techniques used
   • highlight areas for improvement
   • reflect on what you have learnt through your experience
   • discuss how you would do things differently in the future
   Good reflective examples will clearly show how the experience has developed your skills. Where you are describing your personal involvement and experience you are encouraged to use the first person even though this is a formal report.

10. Make sure you cover all aspects required for each report. Check the feedback sheet and the criteria as well as the assignment brief as this can help you see how the report will be assessed. It is a good idea to review your work against these criteria to check that you have met the expectations for each part of the report.

11. You can use examples of work deliverables as evidence to back up your examples. All tables, diagrams, screen-shots, photographs etc. should be labelled and referred to in the text. Please ensure that you have permission to use photographs, diagrams, etc. before compiling your report and check with your Work-based Supervisor that there are no issues with confidentiality and sensitivity of information presented.

12. You may be sent on training courses, these should be mentioned in your reports: where possible you are also advised to obtain certificates of attendance. If you attend any meetings of BCS – the Chartered Institute for IT or similar, these should also be mentioned in your Reports and your SPPY Record. In all cases you should make a statement regarding their value with particular reference to your training.

13. Ensure that grammar, punctuation and spelling are carefully considered and checked prior to submission of the report.
7. Placement Timetable

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<th>Autumn Year 2</th>
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<th>Autumn Placement Year</th>
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Notes:
1. The placement can start anytime during the Summer vacation period of Year 2 providing that students have successfully progressed from Year 2 (see section 1.2).
2. Students who have not obtained a placement by the enrolment week following successful completion of Year 2 will be required to transfer to the three year version of their programme.
3. The initial reflective report is due 4 months after your start date.
4. The SPPY Record is due 8 months after your start date.
5. The final reflective report needs to be submitted one year after the start of your placement (or by 1st September if that is sooner).
6. The placement period needs to finish before the start of enrolment week of your Final Year.
Appendix 1: Glossary

A1.1 Assessment Panel
The panel comprising of: Module Leader, SPPY Tutors and other Academic staff is charged with assessing and providing feedback on the student's presentation and reflective report.

A1.2 Module Leader
The member of academic staff responsible for CMT2500 Placement module taken by students on BSc programmes “with Year in Industry”. The module leader is responsible for the smooth running and periodic review of the placement element of the programmes. The responsibilities of the module leader are given in Section 4.3.

A1.3 Placement Consultants
The School is working in conjunction with Placement Consultants from an independent company, contracted to provide services to the School to assist with elements associated with Placements. Their responsibilities are given in Section 4.2.

A1.4 Placement Provider
The ‘employer’ that will provide the placement. This may be a company, charity or any other suitable organisation.

A1.6 SPPY Tutor
The SPPY Tutor acts as the University Representative and may be a representative from the Placement Consultants or a member of Academic staff. The SPPY Tutor will normally make two visits to the student’s workplace to discuss your progress with your Work-based Supervisor. The visits will also fulfill a pastoral role, and help to resolve any difficulties that may have arisen.

A1.5 Work-based Supervisor
The person charged by the Placement Provider with providing mentoring and supervision for the student whilst on placement. The Work-based Supervisor will normally be the student’s line manager whilst on placement. The Work-based Supervisor will be the person that meets regularly with the student to set objectives, discuss progress and provide guidance. The Work-based Supervisor will also assess the student’s progress whilst on placement (at time of the first and second visit by the SPPY Tutor and at the end of the placement).
Appendix 2: Skills Framework for the Information Age.

One of the main learning outcomes for the CM2500 Placement module is to reflect on how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills on placement and discuss how these will contribute to your on-going professional development. You should use Professional IT Skills will be derived from the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) to help you do this.

A2.1 Introduction to Skills Framework for the Information Age

The creators of the Skills Framework for the Information Age were determined that SFIA would be a useful tool for managers and professionals working in information technology around the world. In order to achieve that, the design goals were:

- Emphasis on skills, not technologies or products
- A practical tool that fits into any scheme of management
- Reflects informed thinking in the IT industry

These were achieved so successfully that SFIA has become the IT world’s favourite skills framework. In May 2003, the SFIA Foundation was established by BCS, e-skills UK, IMIS and the IET to own, promote and maintain SFIA.

SFIA

- is the UK government backed IT skills standard. It provides a common reference model of roles that exist in IT and the skills needed to perform them
- has gained industry-wide recognition including acknowledgement from the following bodies: e-skills, BCS, IET, IMIS, Intellect, OGC, itSMF and the DTI.
- allows employers to measure the skills they have against the skills they need and identify skill gaps

A2.2 Generic skills and levels of responsibility

It is constructed as a two-dimensional matrix, describing levels of responsibility (generic skills) on one axis and categories of work (professional skills) on another.

There are seven levels of responsibility; each has a full definition expressed in terms of Autonomy, influence and Business skills.

Level 1 Follow
Level 2 Assist
Level 3 Apply
Level 4 Enable
Level 5 Ensure / advise
Level 6 Initiate / influence
Level 7 Set strategy / inspire / mobilise
The levels cover the range from starter to senior IT manager and world-leading technologist. The nature of these generic definitions makes them suitable for use as the basis of core competencies.

A2.3 Professional IT Skills

There are over 100 different Professional IT Skills defined in the SFIA framework. The skills definitions are diagnostic, not prescriptive; they contain enough information to enable a judgement as to whether someone has the skill, and at what level. They do not attempt to list all the things that the skilled individual might be able to do. The definitions provide precise statements of the various levels of skill required.

There are six main categories of work/professional skills:

1. Strategy and architecture
2. Business change
3. Solution development and implementation
4. Service Management
5. Procurement and management support
6. Client Interface

SFIA's generic levels provide a background against which the specific professional skills can be judged. An example of the layout of a skill (Programming/Software development PROG) is shown here:

The skill has a name, a code and an overall description; there is also a specific interpretation of the skill at each of the levels at which it is recognised.

**Programming/software development PROG**

The design, creation, testing and documenting of new and amended programs from supplied specifications in accordance with agreed standards.

**Level 4** Designs, codes, tests, corrects and documents large and/or complex programs and program modifications from supplied specifications using agreed standards and tools, to achieve a well-engineered result. Takes part in reviews of own work and leads reviews of colleagues' work.
Using the SFIA Framework on your Placement

This is a guide to show how you might use the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) Framework Reference to help you develop suitable reflective examples in your initial reflective report and final reflective report, which will be used to assess how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills on placement.

1. Identifying Suitable Professional IT Skills for your Role

In the first couple of weeks of your placement you should identify one or more appropriate Professional IT Skills from the SFIA Framework Reference that will enable you to carry out your role, responsibilities and work objectives. There are nearly 100 different IT Professional Skills defined in the framework.

Example

Bethan has obtained a placement as a Business Analyst in a large multi-national organisation. In her initial meeting with her Work-based Supervisor she is informed that her main responsibilities are to analyse and specify requirements and develop acceptance tests for the requirements. Bethan mentions how she will be assessed on the placement including that she needs to provide reflective examples of how she has developed her technical and/or professional skills in one or more relevant Professional IT Skills from the SFIA framework. Bethan and her supervisor agree to meet again to discuss this further. After the meeting Bethan identifies potential Professional IT Skills from the list in the Framework Summary.

Framework summary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>1</th>
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Advice and guidance

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Bethan identifies the following Professional IT Skills: Business Analysis, Requirements Definition and Management both from the Business Change Category and Testing from the Solution Development and Implementation Category.
Bethan looks in the Index of Skills Definitions to find the skills in the SFIA Framework Reference.

Bethan reads through each of the descriptions for the IT Professional Skills she has identified to see if these are relevant. She notices that the descriptions define skills at different levels: Business Analysis for levels 3 to 6, Requirements Definition and Management for levels 2 to 6 and Testing for levels 1 to 6.

2. Assessing Professional IT Skills against the SFIA Levels

The SFIA framework has defined seven different levels of responsibility based on the levels of autonomy, influence, complexity and business skills required to demonstrate that a person is working at each of the levels.

BCS – The Chartered Institute for IT requires that person needs to demonstrate that they are working at SFIA level 5 when they apply for Chartered IT Professional status. Masters placement students need to demonstrate that they are working at SFIA level 4 by the end of their placement. Most undergraduate students should be able to demonstrate that they are working at SFIA level 3 in at least one of their IT Professional Skills by the end of their placement. If undergraduate students do particularly well in an IT Professional Skill then they may be able to demonstrate that they are working at SFIA level 4.

In the first two weeks of your placement you should assess your current skills against the framework for the IT Professional Skills you have identified as being relevant for your role. At least once a month you should review how you are developing your Professional IT Skills against the SFIA levels. This will be discussed further in the following section.
The generic level descriptors outlined above are useful when it comes to writing reflective examples for the initial and final reflective reports. This will be discussed in the final section.

Example

At the start of the placement Bethan assesses her current skills against the descriptors for her identified IT Professional Skills of Business Analysis, Requirements Definition and Management and Testing. Business Analysis starts at SFIA level 3 and Bethan realises she has little or no relevant experience for this skill.

Bethan completes Form A: Initial Evaluation of Professional IT Skills in her SPPY folder.
Requirements Definition and Management starts at SFIA level 2. Bethan realises that she has had experience at this level in the Developing Quality Software and Systems Design and Group Project modules to identify problems, specify and document requirements. She has learnt about processes and techniques to manage changes to requirements but the groups did not use these in their projects.

Testing starts at SFIA level 1 but Bethan realises that her experience is more appropriate to level 2. She has done most of the activities at level 2 in the Developing Quality Software and Systems Design and Group Project modules except for creating test scripts and using project test plans.

When Bethan next meets her Work-based Supervisor she discusses her current experience for the IT Professional Skills she has identified. This helps Bethan's Work-based Supervisor in setting initial work objectives for Bethan. These give scope to allow Bethan to develop her level 2 skills in Requirements Definition and Management and in Testing in the first four months.

Bethan records the work objectives given by her work supervisor and objectives for developing her IT Professional Skills for Requirements Definition and Management and for Testing in her SPPY Record in Form B.1 Objectives for the First Four Months of the Placement. She also needs to plan her Personal and Employability Development Objectives for the first four months. She realises that her initial reflective report will need good coverage of the Commercial Awareness Objectives and she also plans to cover at least one objective for each of the following: Teamwork Skills; Communication Skills; Influence and Leadership; Problem Solving Skills; Task Management. She also plans to update her Self-Confidence and Self-Awareness Objectives each month.

3. Review, Record and Evaluate your Progress

The SFIA framework can help you review, record and evaluate your progress on placement.

- During the placement you should record examples in your SPPY folder of how you are meeting your work objectives and link this to the IT Professional Skills you’ve identified.
- At least once a month you should evaluate your progress in meeting the work objectives set by your Work-based Supervisor and how this contributes to developing your Professional IT Skills against the SFIA levels. This is also a good time to check how you are progressing on meeting the SPPY Development Objectives (outlined in Section 5.2). You should then discuss your progress with your Work-based Supervisor or SPPY Tutor.
- You may need to identify and evaluate new IT Professional Skills from the SFIA framework as you get new responsibilities and work objectives.

Example

Each week Bethan finds time to update her SPPY folder with examples of how she is meeting her work objectives and how these link to the appropriate IT Professional Skills. So, for example, when one of the other Business Analysts trains Bethan in
using the Requirements Management tool then Bethan realises this is helping to develop her skills for Requirements Definition and Management at SFIA level 2. At the end of each month Bethan reviews and records her progress. She starts by evaluating how her work is helping her progress on the work objectives set by her Work-based Supervisor and identifies what she is doing well and what areas need improvement. She then evaluates how her experience in the last month is helping her to develop her IT Professional Skills. She meets with her Work-based Supervisor to discuss her progress and determine her work objectives for the coming month. Bethan also looks to see if she can update any of the SPPY Development Objectives in her SPPY folder and identify SPPY Development Objectives to address in the following month.

Bethan makes good progress in the first few months and looks at potential areas for starting to develop her skills to SFIA level 3. She particularly focuses on understanding the differences between level 2 and level 3 for Requirements Definition and Management and for Testing to identify potential areas to build on her current skills. This is discussed with her Work-based Supervisor at the progress meeting and Bethan is set a few work objectives to enable her to develop some of these areas.

After a couple more months Bethan’s Work-based Supervisor is pleased with Bethan’s progress and decides to broaden Bethan’s experience. Bethan is set new work objectives to enable her to gain experience of Systems Analysis at SFIA level 3. At the end of the month Bethan reviews her progress.

4. Develop Reflective Examples for the Initial and Final Reflective Reports

Your initial reflective report and your final reflective report require you to overview your progress and provide reflective examples that demonstrate how you have developed your technical and/or professional skills in one or more relevant Professional IT Skills from the SFIA framework. In order to get high marks then each of your examples need to be reflective and insightful and should clearly demonstrate the SFIA level you have reached for the relevant Professional IT Skill.

Example

Bethan needs to write her initial reflective report. She is pleased that she has recorded her experience each week and looks through the examples and her monthly progress reviews in her SPPY Record. Bethan overviews her progress in her Work Objectives and IT Professional Skills in her report. She briefly describes how her work has developed her skills at SFIA level 2 in the Requirements Definition and Management and Testing Professional skills and in a couple of areas she describes how she has started working at SFIA level 3.

Bethan realises that she has many possible examples that could be included in the report. She finds that the generic level descriptors on page 12 of the SFIA framework are useful in identifying reflective examples that best demonstrate her autonomy and responsibility in carrying out the task including her involvement in the decision making, her influence with team members and other stakeholders, complexity of the task and how she has tackled this complexity and the business skills required to
carry out the task. She writes up her examples addressing the relevant generic level descriptors and makes sure that each example has a clear explanation of how her work addresses a specific area of one of the IT Professional Skills for the appropriate SFIA level. She evaluates her effectiveness in carrying out her work, highlighting her strengths and weaknesses. Where appropriate Bethan evaluates the effectiveness of methods, tools and techniques used and she highlights areas for improvement. Bethan reflects on what she has learnt for each example, and she discusses how she would do things differently in the future where appropriate.