



Student: Yusuf Musa Abubakar
University of Surrey
Placement: National Physical
Laboratory
Role: Researcher

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What is the subject of your PhD?

Silicon and silicon carbide radiation detectors for alpha and neutron detection at elevated temperatures.

Why did you decide to do a placement?

Nearing the end of my PhD, it appeared that there was a gap in my understanding of the nature of work offered in organisations outside of academia. This is because I had no experience working in industry or related organisations. I was also interested in improving my knowledge in an application of LabVIEW to solve a problem in the more realistic world. Additionally, I had always been tempted to improve my networking with well-respected organisations such as NPL.

Describe a typical day on placement:

Each day started with a short discussion with my manager so that I could raise any concerns or ask questions regarding the project I was doing. I then continued with my program design. Occasionally, I made presentations to my group for advice and suggestions towards improving the work. Sometimes, I went to the laboratory to study the delta-sigma system and record new data for testing my program.

What skills and knowledge do you feel you have learned during the placement?

I have learned to work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Being a part time worker, I had to manage two projects (PhD and placement) and make sure that there was no overlap between the two. Using my knowledge to solve specific problems has given me additional confidence as a researcher.

How do you think doing a placement has benefited you for the future?

The placement has assisted me in a number of ways. It will bridge the gap existing in my CV between academia and industry work and add more value to it - making me more employable. My network is stronger with additional contacts at NPL. I can manage more than one project at a time through my recent experience.

What advice would you give to a PGR student who might be interested in seeking a placement?

Do not hesitate to do a placement because of fear of distraction from your academic work. If you are interested in doing a placement, go for it. You cannot be sure which type of working environment will suit you without giving it a try.

Employer perspective:

Hosting a PhD placement was a great opportunity to bring in a talented student to focus on delivering a particular part of a larger project. Yusuf took on this challenging project with great enthusiasm and produced useful results on filter design that will be used in the final system.

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