

Using SFIA in Higher Education

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1. Introduction

The current document aims to provide practical suggestions to higher education providers who are considering using SFIA for the work-based parts of their degree programmes (e.g. for placements, internships and degree apprenticeships). It is based on the experiences of three UK-based higher education providers who are already applying SFIA for this purpose.

It is important to note that the aim of this document is not to distinguish between any “right” and “wrong” ways of applying SFIA in higher education. It is also not the aim of the SFIA Foundation to provide any kind of accreditation of higher education providers who are applying SFIA. Instead, we specify a number of considerations that each higher education organisation will be facing when thinking of how to apply SFIA in their specific context. For each of these questions, we examine some of the possible answers, based on how SFIA is currently being used by two UK-based higher education providers.

This document is structured as follows. First, in Section 2 we give a brief overview of two UK-based higher education providers who are using SFIA in their degree programmes. Then, in Section 3 we provide a number of questions on how to apply SFIA for academic purposes, together with an overview of how these questions are currently addressed by different higher education providers.

2. Two Higher Education Providers that are Using SFIA

The current section provides a brief overview of two UK-based higher education providers (Cardiff University, the University of Strathclyde, and the University of York) who are currently using SFIA in some of their degree programmes.

2.1. Cardiff University

Cardiff University is the largest university of Wales. It is also the only university in Wales that is

part of the Russell group of research intensive UK-based universities. At the School of Computer Science and Informatics, SFIA is used to support the placement year of several computer science based degree programmes. This placement year consists of a period of 7 to 12 months, roughly following the academic year. For the undergraduate (BSc) degree programmes, the placement year is sandwiched between year 2 and year 3 of the taught part of the degree programme (meaning that the entire degree programme takes 4 years, including placement). For the postgraduate (MSc) degree programmes, the placement year is sandwiched between the taught year of the degree programme and the dissertation project (meaning the entire degree programme is 2 years, including placement). For each degree programme with placement, the school also offers a similar degree programme without placement; these degree programmes are one year shorter.

2.2. University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde is a leading international technological university. It delivers a wide range of graduate and degree apprenticeship programmes. Working in partnership with employers, these programmes provide learners with significant workplace experience while working towards a degree. Apprentices typically spend 80% of their time working in roles with the employer and 20% on academic study. At the end of the programme, graduates have gained both an honours degree and four years of significant workplace experience, making it highly attractive to candidates as well as employers. Formal work-based learning (WBL) is a key component of these programmes – accounting for around a quarter of the credits awarded on the programme. On the IT: Software Development graduate apprenticeship, significant use is made of SFIA to (Skills Framework for the Information Age). It provides a clear framework for the WBL experience, providing structure both for planning of skills development and recording of practice as a portfolio of evidence.

3. Considerations when Applying SFIA in Higher Education

In the current section, we provide a number of questions that higher education providers face when applying SFIA in their academic programmes. For each of these questions, we provide a brief overview of how the three higher education providers mentioned above address it. To provide structure to the discussion, we group the questions into six different categories. For current purposes, we use the term *soft skills* to refer to the generic attributes of autonomy, influence and complexity, together with knowledge and business skills/behavioural factors, and we use the term *hard skills* for the SFIA Professional Skills. We use the term *work-based supervisor* for the person supervising the student at the placement provider (often the line manager) and the term *academic supervisor* for the person at the higher education provider who is supervising the student from an academic perspective.

3.1. Learning Outcomes

3.1.1. Do you want to use SFIA for the hard skills or for the soft skills?

Or, alternatively, do you want to use SFIA for both the hard skills and the soft skills?

Cardiff University

In our placement programmes, we use SFIA for both the hard and soft skills. The hard skills are selected by the students, based on the work they are doing during their placement. The soft skills, however, are the same for each student.

University of Strathclyde

For WBL, the strength of SFIA comes from its ability to support development of hard and soft skills. It is important that apprentices evidence a range of soft skills along with their technical capability, therefore SFIA is used to assess both hard and soft skill development.

3.1.2. What do you want the students to achieve regarding the hard skills?

In particular, what level should the students reach for how many hard skills or combinations of hard skills? Also, what does it actually mean to reach a particular level of a hard skill? Does this mean that each and every criterion has to be satisfied, or is there scope for some more flexibility e.g. selection of appropriate hard skills?[Link to SFIA guidance on selecting skills for roles/jobs]

Cardiff University

What we want our students to achieve during their placement year depends on whether they are doing an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. We expect our undergraduate students to achieve level 3 and our postgraduate students to achieve level 4 of at least one of the hard skills. Normally, this means that all criteria of that particular level need to be fulfilled (e.g. all criteria of level 3 of PROG, or all criteria of level 4 of TEST). The particular hard skill (e.g. PROG or TEST) is chosen by the student, in consultation with his/her employer. In cases where a particular level 3 or 4 criterion is not satisfied, this can be compensated by satisfying a criterion of the level above. Occasionally, we have a student who does a very diverse range of work (e.g. a student who rotates through different departments of their placement provider during their placement year). Such a student may satisfy *some* level 3 or 4 criteria of a *range* of hard skills but fail to satisfy *all* level 3 or 4 criteria of a *single* skill. In such a case, we examine whether the level 3 or 4 skills that are satisfied among the range of hard skills can be seen as equivalent to satisfying all criteria of a single skill.

University of Strathclyde

Over the course of the programme, the SFIA levels of responsibility are used to support progression of the apprentices. To reflect the increasing level of responsibility that apprentices

tend to be given, learners work through Level 2, 3 and 4. They are given two terms to work at Level 2, four terms at Level 3 and five terms at level 4. Each term is 12 weeks in length and the learners will also be gaining and documenting experience over the summer between each academic year. Level 4 is a significant challenge for learners, and this is a deliberate design choice for the programme. Alongside Level 4, apprentices are working on their final year work-based project, which is used to help create opportunities to demonstrate Level 4 skills.

3.1.3. What do you want the students to achieve regarding the soft skills?

Should the students for instance reach a particular level for each and every soft skill? Should they reach a particular level for just one soft skill? Or should they perhaps reach a minimum percentage of criteria (e.g. 50%) of all criteria of all soft skills of a particular level?

Cardiff University

What we want our students to achieve during their placement year depends on whether they are doing an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. We expect our undergraduate students to achieve level 3 and our postgraduate students to achieve level 4 of the soft skills. Unlike the hard skills, which students get to choose depending on the work they do at their placement provider, the soft skills are always the same. To provide a bit of flexibility, students only have to satisfy half of the level 3 or 4 soft skill criteria, across the range of all soft skills.

University of Strathclyde

At Level 2, learners are expected to demonstrate a subset of skills; due to the shorter nature of time they have to demonstrate Level 2. At Level 3, all skills should generally be demonstrated, At Level 4, the majority should be demonstrated to some degree, and the apprentice is required to write a reflective statement demonstrating how any omissions could be demonstrated in the future.

3.2. Questions Regarding how to Assess the Students

3.2.1. Who determines whether the skills are actually satisfied?

Who determines which criteria of the SFIA hard and/or soft skills are satisfied? Is this the student, the work-based supervisor or the academic supervisor? In the latter case, is the academic supervisor actually close enough to the day-to-day activities of the student in order to be able to assess this?

Cardiff University

At Cardiff University, we visit the students only three times during their placement. This means we are not close enough to the day-to-day activities of our students in order to assess directly which of the SFIA hard and soft skills are satisfied. As such, we decided to rely on the opinion of

both the student and the work-based supervisor regarding which criteria are satisfied. Each of them is provided with a form that contains both the soft skills and the selected hard skills; each of them highlights (in yellow) which criteria are satisfied. We encourage the student and the work-based supervisor to sit together and agree on which criteria are satisfied.

University of Strathclyde

All assessment is undertaken by the apprentice's assigned Learning Adviser and undergoes moderation. For Level 4, this assessment is also undertaken by a second marker, and agreement is reached. The LAs will have been working consistently with the apprentice and will have sufficient understanding of their day-to-day activities to be able to assess the apprentice.

3.2.2. How do you record the skills obtained from the work-based experience?

Cardiff University

Undergraduate students are provided with forms that contain the level 3 soft skills criteria, as well as the level 2, 3 and 4 criteria for one or two chosen hard skills. Postgraduate students are provided with forms that contain the level 4 soft skills criteria, as well as the level 3, 4 and 5 criteria for one or two chosen hard skills. The reason for putting three different levels on the forms regarding the hard skills is that we want to see how close the students are to their target level (e.g. does an undergraduate student whose target it is to satisfy the level 3 criteria already satisfy the level 2 criteria?). Also, we want the students to be able to compensate for a missed criterion at their target level by satisfying a criterion of the level above.

When we just started our placement programme (more than 10 years ago) we used to create these forms by hand. The students would tell us which two hard skills (SFIA Professional Skills) their placement relates to, and we would copy/paste the relevant criteria from the SFIA document into the forms (together with the soft skills criteria, which are the same for all students). However, with rising student numbers, we developed a web application where our students can generate their own forms in an automated way.

University of Strathclyde

Apprentices record workplace experience in a portfolio of evidence. This is an off-the-shelf e-portfolio system configured with SFIA competencies. Apprentices use the Situation, Task, Action Result (STAR) template when recording evidence. Additionally, for each item of evidence the learner must include a personal reflection on the task. The e-portfolio system provides a mechanism for the LA to record feedback on individual items of evidence as well as on overall portfolio progression.

3.2.3. How do you resolve any differences between the student's view and the work-based supervisor's view regarding which criteria are satisfied?

Cardiff University

In general, we encourage the student and the work-based supervisor to sit together and agree on which criteria are satisfied. However, if there are any differences between what the student highlighted and what the work-based supervisor highlighted on their respective forms, then the student is asked to explain in his placement report what is the difference in interpretation of these criteria. As the placement report is signed off by the work-based supervisor as true and accurate, this means that the student and work-based supervisor at least agree on the cause of the difference. We will then use this information to decide whether we will go for the student's version or for the work-based supervisor's version.

University of Strathclyde

The work-based supervisor provides confirmation that WBL evidence and reports developed by the apprentice are an accurate reflection of the work undertaken, but does not undertake any direct assessment. This approach is designed with consistency in mind, as the apprenticeship cohort is based in a diverse range of employers.

3.2.4. Do you want to see any written explanation that the soft and/or hard skill criteria are indeed satisfied?

Cardiff University

We ask our students to write a report about their placement. This report contains a section where the student writes about the soft skills and a section where the student writes about the hard skills. As for the soft skills, the student is asked to pick *one* criterion for each soft skill and explain how and why this criterion is satisfied (i.e. what work did the student do during the placement to satisfy this criterion). As for the hard skills, the student is asked to explain how and why *all* of the criteria of the target level (that is, of level 3 for an undergraduate student and level 4 for a postgraduate student) of a chosen hard skill are satisfied.¹

University of Strathclyde

For each item of portfolio evidence, the apprentice must add a clear linkage statement to the competencies as the final element of evidence. In this way, learners are engaged to consider exactly in what manner the evidence supports individual competencies, i.e. the specific elements of the task demonstrate the competency they are claiming. This helps prevent "scatter gunning" of evidence against competencies, or situations where the apprentice does not perhaps grasp the full meaning of an individual competency. This linkage also provides a starting point for Learning Advisers to discuss understanding of individual competencies with apprentices.

For Level 4, apprentices submit a reflective report as part of their final year project, drawing on evidence in their portfolio. For each competency, they are asked to explain their understanding of the competency, tying it to their specific circumstances in the workplace. They then select and summarise key evidence which clearly demonstrates the competency. Finally, they reflect

¹This includes any criteria above the target level if these are needed to compensate for any missing criteria at the target level itself.

on the overall degree to which they demonstrate the competency, and if they feel they have not fully met the competency, they can explain work they would undertake in the future to do so.

3.2.5. How can you be sure of the truthfulness of such an explanation?

Cardiff University

We ask the work-based supervisor to sign off the student's placement report. This is done by including the following text at the end of the report:

As the work-based supervisor of [name of student] at [name of placement provider], I [name of work-based supervisor] confirm that to my best knowledge, the information in this report is accurate and does not contain any confidential information of the kind that should not be shared with employees of Cardiff University or any other UK-based university.

University of Strathclyde

The apprentices' assigned Learning Advisers review a sample of evidence with each learner as part of regular 1:1s. Line managers are asked to provide a written statement for the Level 4 competency report to confirm the work described was undertaken by the apprentice. A template is provided to them for this statement.

3.2.6. Do the students simply pass/fail or do they get an actual mark?

Cardiff University

We give our students an actual mark for their placement year. This mark will count to 10% of their overall degree mark.

University of Strathclyde

In first and second year, WBL is graded as pass/fail. In third and fourth year, where the module credits contribute to degree classification, numeric marks are given.

3.2.7. How is the mark (or the pass/fail decision) determined?

Cardiff University

We ask our students to write a reflective report on their placement. This report should contain the following sections:

1. Placement Overview
 - 1.1 Company Overview
 - 1.2 Section/Department/Team Overview
 - 1.3 Placement Summary
2. Work Experiences
 - 2.1 Work Impact

- 2.2 Work Reflection
- 2.3 Addressing Supervisor Feedback
- 3. Explanation of Soft Skills
 - 3.1 Autonomy
 - 3.2 Influence
 - 3.3 Complexity
 - 3.4 Knowledge
 - 3.5 Business Skills
- 4. Explanation of Hard Skills (SFIA Professional Skills)
- 5. Confirmation and Approval of Work-Based Supervisor

The above sections contribute to 90% of the student's placement mark. The additional 10% comes from a poster about their placement (for undergraduate students) or from an additional section on On-going Professional Development (for postgraduate students).

At Cardiff University, we want to protect the students who do a great placement but have difficulties writing things up. Similarly, we want to guard against students who do a substandard placement but are somehow able to put a spin to this in their report/poster. This is where the SFIA hard and soft skills come in. An undergraduate student whose report/poster mark is below 60 will be topped up to 60 when achieving level 3 (level 4 for postgraduate students) of both the hard and soft skills. Similarly, an undergraduate student whose report/poster is 60 or above will be capped to 59 when failing to achieve level 3 (level 4 for postgraduate students) of the hard skills or soft skills. In this way, we do not fail a student who achieves the target SFIA level. However, if a student wishes to achieve a mark of above 60, then in addition to reaching the target SFIA level, the report/poster also has to be of a good standard.

University of Strathclyde

For pass/fail modules, the apprentice must achieve minimum engagement and quality standards in WBL. This includes the number of items of evidence submitted, quality of evidence, and engagement with meetings with their Learning Adviser. For the Level 4 assessment, a rubric is provided which assesses competency demonstration, overall reflection and quality of the report. Each dimension has five zones which correspond to marks in the degree classification range.

3.3. Questions Regarding the Supervision

3.3.1. **How do you make sure that the student is on track for meeting the target SFIA level?**

How do you make sure the student is doing the kind of work that will actually lead to satisfying this level? How often will you do a check-up on this?

Cardiff University

We visit the students three times during their placement year.² One of these visits is in-person,

²Students who are doing their placement overseas can have all of their three visits online, if needed.

the other two visits can be held online. The first visit is 2 or 3 months into the placement. During this visit, we check whether the student has settled in, and we try to identify two hard skills³ such that the work the student is expected to do is likely to lead to satisfying the target SFIA level (level 3 for undergraduate students and level 4 for postgraduate students) by the time of the coursework deadline in May. The second visit is more or less mid-way the placement (in December or January). To prepare this visit, the student is asked to submit a draft version of the forms at which the satisfied criteria of the SFIA hard skills and soft skills are highlighted. During the visit, these forms (student version and work-based supervisor version) are then discussed. If there are still any gaps regarding the target SFIA level, then the work-based supervisor will be asked to give the student the kind of work that will allow for these gaps to be filled by the time of the coursework deadline in May. If necessary, another check-up can happen during the third placement visit (which takes place no later than early April).

University of Strathclyde

Apprentices are supported by an assigned LA, who works with them on a 1:1 basis to navigate the WBL elements of the programme. The LAs are all members of university staff who are employed specifically in this role. Each LA has significant industry experience and can use this experience when guiding the apprentice through their WBL journey.

The LA meets with the apprentice 1:1 twice per term, with meetings held virtually. They provide overall WBL guidance, tailored to the specific workplace situation of the apprentice. The LA assists with interpreting apprenticeship competencies, translating the abstract concepts into concrete examples that relate to each individual apprentice's workplace situation. The LA also provides feedback on individual portfolio evidence submissions as well as overall portfolio progress.

3.3.2. What are your expectations for the work-based supervisor?

What are your expectations regarding the work-based supervisor, especially from an academic perspective? How will these be communicated?

Cardiff University

The main expectation for the work-based supervisor is to make sure the student is doing the kind of work that will allow for the target SFIA level to be reached by the time of the coursework deadline in May. Apart from that, we also ask the work-based supervisor to:

- provide an Employer Evaluation form at each of the three visits of the academic supervisor (this form provides a snapshot of how the student is doing),
- provide the work-based supervisor version of the SFIA mapping form of half-way the placement (this is the form that contains the criteria of the hard and soft skills of the SFIA target level; the idea is to highlight in yellow which skills are already satisfied),
- provide a similar work-based supervisor version of the SFIA mapping form at the time of the coursework deadline in May (this form, together with the student version of this form, is used by the university to assess whether the target SFIA level of the hard and soft

³Although we put two hard skills on the form, we only require the student to reach the target SFIA level for one of them. The second one mainly serves as a fallback option.

- skills is satisfied),
- sign off the draft version of the placement report, which is to be submitted within 30 days after the second placement visit
 - sign off the final version of the placement report, which is to be submitted by the time of the coursework deadline in May

These expectations are discussed with the work-based supervisor during the first placement visit (2 or 3 months into the placement)

University of Strathclyde

The main expectation of the work-based supervisor is to provide appropriate workplace opportunities for the apprentice. They may also be required to attend occasional meetings with the LA.

3.3.3. Do you have any way of making sure the work-based supervisor meets expectations?

Cardiff University

Before starting the placement, the university, the student and the placement provider each sign the Placement Agreement Form, which states the obligations of each of these three parties. At the placement provider, this form is usually signed by their HR department. Although our experience is that the vast majority of the work-based supervisors are very supportive, we occasionally do encounter a work-based supervisor who needs to be reminded of the contractual obligations specified in the Placement Agreement Form.

University of Strathclyde

At the start of the academic year, all workplace supervisors are invited to a workshop where the programme content is set out and the WBL elements of the programme are explained. Supervisors are also provided with guidance on the competencies which the apprentices are expected to demonstrate. They also receive a guide to supporting the fourth year project.

3.3.4. How do you make sure that both the student and the work-based supervisor know how to use SFIA?

Cardiff University

The students are provided with our Placement Handbook, which among other things, discusses SFIA. We also make the SFIA document available through the student's online learning portal and explain in the coursework description how SFIA should be used in the placement report. Apart from that, students attend a pre-departure workshop before going on placement, at which SFIA is one of the points being discussed.

During the first placement visit (2 to 3 months after the start of the placement) we explain to the work-based supervisor how SFIA is being used for the university's assessment process. This is also an opportunity for both the student and the work-based supervisor to ask any questions.

University of Strathclyde

The learners are provided with a handbook for WBL and are introduced to SFIA through a number of groupwork sessions when they join the programme. Alongside each competency, additional interpretive guidance is provided. Developed by the WBL team at Strathclyde, this guidance explains ways in which the competency may be demonstrated by an apprentice in a workplace role that is typical for our employers and for apprentices on this programme. Our employers are invited to a workshop at the start of each academic year, where information and guidance is provided on the WBL elements of the programme.

3.3.5. Do you have any kind of trial version of the assessment?

Cardiff University

We understand that some of our students might not be completely familiar with the kind of reflective writing that is required for the placement report. This is why we ask the students to submit a draft version of their reflective report. This is to be submitted after the second visit of the academic supervisor. Feedback on this draft reflective report is then provided during the third visit of the academic supervisor.

University of Strathclyde

Learners receive ongoing feedback on evidence submissions to assist in building reflective skills. In fourth year, they may submit a subsection of their competency report to obtain feedback prior to final submission.

3.3.6. Do you provide any pastoral care?

Cardiff University

Pastoral care is an element of each of the three visits of the academic supervisor. In general, we want the student to be settled in, well-integrated and well-supported by the placement providers. We can put placement providers on a blacklist in case they persistently fall short. We also developed a pastoral care info sheet for our academic supervisors, with some concrete things to check for. Apart from that, we have a fortnightly online Check-in and Catch-up meeting, which also serves as a means to keep our students feeling connected to the university during their placement year.

University of Strathclyde

Pastoral care is part of the LA role. As well as generally supporting the apprentice in WBL, the continuing relationship between LA and apprentice provides both a wellbeing and safeguarding opportunity. The LA is not involved in the delivery of academic modules, nor are they employed by the workplace. As a result, they have a significant degree of independence in the eyes of the apprentice. This can enhance the likelihood of an apprentice raising an issue which may otherwise be unreported, potentially even choosing to do so without prior planning. The LA can also engage directly with the employer, e.g. where issues in the apprentice's workload or the support they are receiving are highlighted.

3.4. Questions Regarding Practical Aspects

3.4.1. **How are the students' starting date and finishing date related to your academic year?**

How much flexibility do you allow regarding the starting date and finishing date of your placements, degree apprenticeships or other forms of work-based experiences?

Cardiff University

Students are allowed to start their placements after receiving their transcript of the exam board. This transcript should ideally state that they passed all their previous modules, although undergraduate students are allowed to fail a limited number of modules and still go on placement. Depending on the precise date of the respective exam board, postgraduate students are usually able to start early July, whereas undergraduate students are usually able to start late July.

Some placement providers require students to start before they receive their official transcript. We sometimes turn a blind eye to this. However, we do make clear that by doing this the student takes the risk of having to pull out of the placement if it becomes clear that he/she has failed too many modules.

Placements need to start before the end of September and need to last at least 7 months (for postgraduate students) or 9 months (for undergraduate students).

The placement coursework (which consists of a portfolio containing the reflective report/poster and associated forms) needs to be submitted during respectively the first half of May (for postgraduate students) or the second half of May (for undergraduate students). The placement coursework can then be marked using the normal timeline for spring semester assessments. The placement marks will be submitted to the respective postgraduate and undergraduate exam boards of the spring semester.

After submitting their placement coursework, the students are allowed to continue their placements, although the part of their placements that are after the coursework deadlines will not be assessed. Postgraduate students are allowed to stay on their placements until they have to start their dissertation (mid June). In some cases, it is possible to do a work-based dissertation, which can be carried out at the student's (former) placement provider. Undergraduate students are allowed to continue their placements until the start of the next academic year.

University of Strathclyde

The apprenticeship is synchronised with the start of the standard academic year, though it runs over three twelve week terms rather than two for on-campus learners.

3.4.2. Do you require the students to be paid?

Cardiff University

As a general principle, students are not allowed to go on placement unless their placement is paid. At the very least, payment should be the statutory minimum wage or living wage. In general, we expect the pay to be such that it covers all expenses during the placement year. This includes covering the (reduced) tuition fee, which is one fifth of the normal tuition fee during the placement year. The students should not be out of pocket when doing their placement year. In exceptional cases, we do allow for unpaid placements, but only if the student has an alternative means of financing.

University of Strathclyde

All apprenticeships are paid positions, with the apprentices being full-time employees of the organisations.

3.4.3. Do your students get any additional qualification for the work-based part of their degree programme?

Cardiff University

Our undergraduate students who have successfully finished their degree programme with placement will obtain the degree *Computer Science with a Year in Industry (BSc)*, whereas our undergraduate students who have successfully finished their degree programme without placement will only obtain the degree *Computer Science (BSc)*. Something similar holds for our postgraduate students.

Apart from that, our degree programmes with placements are RITTech accredited by the BCS (the Chartered Institute for IT). The RITTech scheme allows for accreditation of work-based skills (more specifically, work-based soft skills). As our placement programme is in line with the soft skills that RITTech is based on, all our students who finish a degree programme with placement can apply to become RITTech accredited, just by showing the BCS their degree.

University of Strathclyde

Learners who complete the apprenticeship programme gain the award of Bachelor of Science with honours. Our programmes are RITTech accredited by the BCS (the Chartered Institute for IT). Learners are therefore able to apply directly for RITTech accreditation.

3.4.4. What do you do with students who do not find an employer?

Cardiff University

Students are expected to find their own placements. We do, however, provide various forms of support. For instance, we provide training on how to write a CV and cover letter, provide mock assessment centre sessions, and organise a range of student-employer events. We have also developed relations with various employers in South Wales who take some of our students each

year. However, the vast majority of placement positions are advertised in an open way, and the application process is similar to that of any other job position. As such, we do not have a predefined set of placement positions we can simply hand out. Each placement position comes with a competitive application process. We cannot guarantee our students to land any placements. The best we can do is to offer them the right training and support, to equip them for a competitive job market.

Students who do not manage to find placements are allowed to transfer to a similar degree programme without placement year. Such a transfer is done at the end of the taught year for postgraduate students, or at the end of the second year for undergraduate students.

University of Strathclyde

All apprentices must successfully gain employment prior to starting the apprenticeship. We work with employers to ensure prospective students meet the academic entry criteria for the programme.

3.4.5. Do you offer any debriefing session for students who finished the work-based experience of their degree programme?

Cardiff University

Undergraduate students who finished their placements are invited to present their poster at the Placement Poster Session. This session is held during the enrolment week of the next academic year. This poster session is also attended by students who will be searching for placements during this academic year. The idea is to encourage the returning placement students to interact with the students currently searching for placements and to exchange best practices for both landing a placement and actually being on placement.

Although the postgraduate students who finished their placements are also welcome to attend the poster session, many of them will already have finished their degree programme (as they did their dissertation over the summer). The undergraduate students, on the other hand, still have to finish the last year of their degree programme (as their placement year is sandwiched between the second year and the third year of the taught part of their degree programme). As such, the poster session serves as a way of reintegrating the students back into the university after finishing their placement.

University of Strathclyde

There is no formal debriefing element.