

Building the Next Generation

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The Aim

In an industry where lucrative contracting jobs are frequently offered, do we need to think of different methods to acquire and retain talented employees? Obviously experienced staff will always be at a premium, but by offering a route into the industry we can look to build this experience from the ground up, and with it, a sense of loyalty and belonging to a company.



Student Recruitment

Every year we will look to recruit placement students to our statistical programming and statistics departments. We will target University students who are enrolled on mathematics or statistics courses with an industry placement year as part of the curriculum; however we are willing to consider most appropriate applicants and no prior SAS experience is required. Students approaching their third year of University will take a year away from their studies to gain experience in a professional environment. Many students upon completion of their final year of studies have jumped at the opportunity to apply for permanent positions at the company. Other departments across Biometrics have also started similar schemes on a smaller scale.

University Links

Building relations with Universities can form a key part of the recruitment process, with word of mouth and presentations from former placement students notably increasing interest in the scheme. Established links with University contacts themselves play a crucial role too, as whilst advertisements are sent to many Universities, it is ultimately up to them how they publicise the roles. For these reasons we see a lot of strong applicants coming from the same Universities each year.

The Placement Year

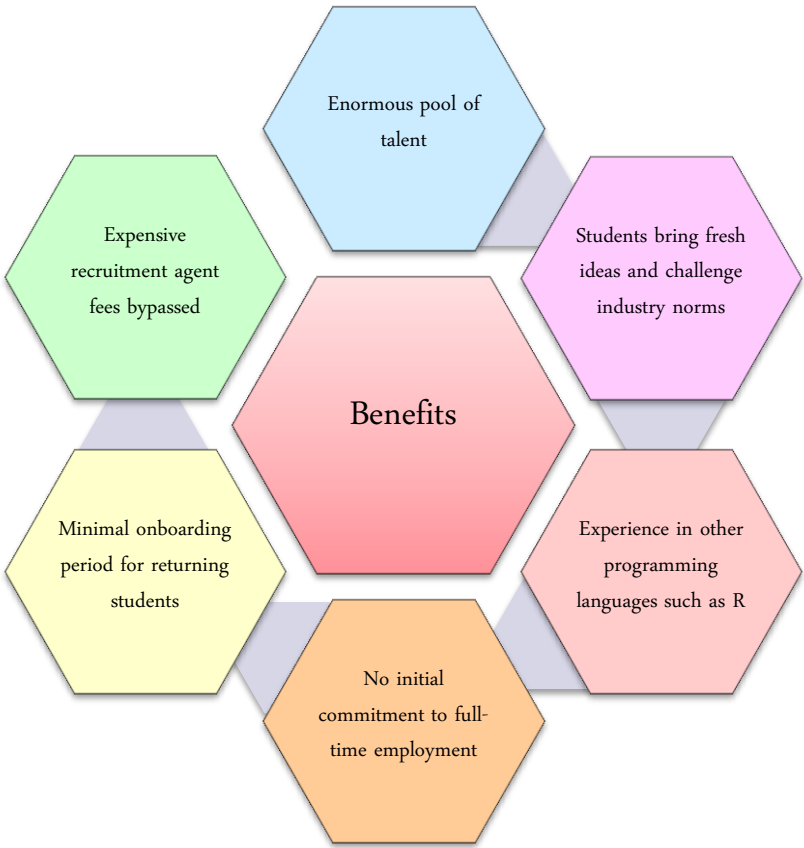
Any starter in a role at a new company has a lot to learn. However, when industry knowledge, therapeutic areas and technical tools are all added to this, there is a lot to take in. This process isn't expected to happen overnight, and support including SAS training courses and close mentorship is provided. With this guidance, placement students can make themselves an asset, rather than an overhead within a few months.

During their placement year, students will be expected to contribute in a large number of areas. Production of datasets, tables, listings and figures, QC of others' work, presentations, department initiatives and even leading small studies may be undertook within the year.

When nearing the end of a placement year, students will often be asked if they'd like to extend their contract until they return to their studies at University. This overlap period with the next intake of students can prove very useful. By this time previous students are able to guide and help train new students in various aspects of the role.

Challenges

- Explaining differences between statistics and statistical programming roles to candidates.
- Late drop-outs from students who have formally accepted offers.
- No guarantees an individual will transition well from high achievement in academia to strong performance in a professional environment.



The Future

Currently we see no reason for the scheme to discontinue. A possible extension could see the scheme working in conjunction with other departments, with rotations or split roles across a period of 12 to 15 months. This would have the benefit of students being able to see which role they are best suited to, whilst also building a more all-round knowledge of the industry and key functions close to their own role. This could also be implemented as part of a graduate recruitment scheme, which would undoubtedly produce fierce competition for places. There are many untapped and talented individuals out there who can benefit from us, just as we can benefit from them.

How many placement students return to Roche?

