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### An evaluation of the impact of a Year in Industry scheme

UK, a Year in Industry (YinI) is one of a number of schemes organised by the Royal Academy of Engineering as part of its *BEST* programme. The aim of the YinI is to attract talented, highly motivated and creative young people into engineering. The scheme has been running since 1987.

In any year, about 700 trainee engineers are involved. High school students, aged 17 to 18, in year 13 of their education, make applications to YinI between September and December. In the following Spring term a successful applicant's placement is agreed. Placements then run from September to July, after graduation from high school and before taking up a place at university. Participants are treated as salaried employees of their companies and attend company training. In addition, they take part in a YinI project and a Project Presentation event in the July at the end of their placement. A questionnaire survey was carried out with engineers graduating in 2001.

To collect data, six university engineering departments with good reputations were selected to provide both sample and control graduate engineers for survey. Initially, it was hoped the control sample of engineering graduates could be matched easily with the YinI participants. Analysis of the A' level (high school leaving examination) profile of the control sample in the six universities showed the cohort of YinI participants had a wider range of academic performance, prior to university, than the control students. Additional controls were therefore needed to give matched profile comparisons in terms of prior academic achievement. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) was added to the analysis. Of all the engineering graduates in 2001, data on 4983 was suitable for some of the comparisons.

Our analysis of the returned survey questionnaire data provides evidence that the year in industry:

- has a beneficial effect on the degree classification of the academically weaker participants, but little effect on the academically stronger;
- encourages all participants to take up further study;
- provides participants with a more positive picture of industry and engineering;
- but does not provide greater motivation to enter industry;
- provides participants with greater financial remuneration in the world of work than would

otherwise be the case.

Our interpretation of the results is in terms of the way young people weigh the benefits of different career paths. Our hypothesis is that this involves them preferring to move to situations where they are more likely to be treated as adults.

As one of the primary financial supporters of *BEST*, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation commissioned this independent survey of YinI participants. The findings and commentary are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

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