



Student Case Study – Aimie Grant, Boeing Defence UK

“My placement gave me invaluable industry experience and a deeper understanding of the aerospace and defence sector, reinforcing my decision to pursue a career in this field after graduating.”

Aimie Grant - BEng (Hons) Cybersecurity & Forensics

Please tell us a bit about yourself

I'm a final year Cybersecurity and Forensics student at Edinburgh Napier University with a lifelong passion for technology and aviation. I have always enjoyed learning and expanding my knowledge across a variety of topics, and I've been fascinated by how things work for as long as I can remember. Alongside my studies, I'm training for my pilot's license, combining my academic background with my love for aviation. I'm passionate about traveling, exploring new cultures, and challenging myself through activities like golf, surfing, and snowboarding, as well as playing the piano and guitar. Whether it's mastering a new melody, catching a wave, or solving problems, I love challenging myself, growing, and seeing the world from different perspectives.

Can you tell us about the placement opportunity you were involved in?

I had the privilege of completing a year-long placement with Boeing Defence UK, working within both their cybersecurity and data services teams. This role perfectly aligned with my passions for aviation and cybersecurity, offering me the chance to work on cutting-edge projects with real-world impact. Based in Bristol, I contributed to efforts focused on national security, collaborating with experts across different disciplines. My placement provided a unique opportunity to apply my academic knowledge to the aerospace industry while also learning from the challenges and complexities of such a highly regulated environment. It was an incredible experience that deepened my understanding of the industry.

Can you tell us more about what your role entailed?

My role involved performing security audits, vulnerability assessments, and malware analysis of critical aviation systems. I collaborated with engineers to identify and mitigate cybersecurity risks, ensuring compliance with industry standards. Additionally, I took on the role of Scrum Master, utilizing my Agile certification to facilitate team collaboration, streamline workflows, and ensure the successful delivery of security-focused projects. This experience allowed me to develop strong leadership and project management skills while contributing to the resilience and efficiency of operational systems. The role also required presenting technical findings to senior staff, which helped me improve my communication and technical documentation skills.

What key skills did your placement teach you?

My placement helped me develop both technical and interpersonal skills. On the technical side, I gained proficiency in penetration testing, agile, and cybersecurity frameworks. I also improved my problem-solving and analytical thinking by working on complex challenges. On a personal level, I became more confident in communicating with professionals, managing my time effectively, and collaborating in a fast-paced, high-stakes environment. These skills have become invaluable as I approach my final year of university as well as future positions.

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“A placement is a learning experience, and stepping out of your comfort zone is where the most growth happens.”

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What were your highlights and key successes of your time on placement?

One of my proudest moments was leading the vulnerability management board, improving system security, and running agile daily stand-ups, sprint planning, and retrospectives. A major highlight was presenting to a conference room of fifty plus people, which pushed me out of my comfort zone and built my confidence. I also had incredible opportunities to visit Air Force bases, Boeing offices, and the Vantage Data Centre in Newport, as well as attend conferences in London, where I networked with industry professionals. The biggest recognition of my contributions was being offered a place on Boeing's graduate scheme.

Do you have any tips (if applicable) on how you have addressed any barriers you have faced from a disability or health condition during your time on placement?

As someone who is neurodivergent, I found that having structured routines and clear communication was essential during my placement. Regular check-ins with my manager helped me stay on track and provided opportunities for feedback, which improved my confidence in the workplace. Using organisational tools like task management software and setting reminders also made it easier to manage multiple projects and deadlines effectively.

Did you face any challenges during your time on placement?

Managing multiple projects and delivering presentations to senior stakeholders and customers were two key challenges during my placement. I overcame these by relying on self-study, internal training, and guidance from colleagues to build my skills and confidence. Using Agile methodologies and structured planning tools, I effectively prioritised tasks. Additionally, presenting technical findings required me to tailor complex information to different audiences, which I achieved through thorough preparation, rehearsals, and seeking feedback. These experiences significantly improved my organisational and communication skills.

How do you feel that your studies at Edinburgh Napier University prepare you for this placement?

My studies provided a strong foundation in cybersecurity, problem-solving, and professional communication, which were essential during my placement. Coursework and projects helped me develop adaptability and time management skills, making it easier to transition into a fast-paced work environment. The Careers Team also played a significant role in my preparation, offering guidance on CV writing, interview techniques, and industry expectations, which gave me the confidence to apply for competitive placements. Their support in decision-making and career planning helped me identify opportunities that aligned with my skills and long-term goals.

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“Placement experience not only boosts your CV but also gives you an advantage in securing graduate roles, as many companies value practical experience just as much as academic performance.”

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Do you think your experience from the placement affected your future career plans or last year of university?

Absolutely. It allowed me to work on high-security projects and gain insight into the standards and challenges of the industry. The experience also gave me the confidence to take on more leadership responsibilities in my final year and a clearer understanding of what I want in my career. Being offered a place on Boeing’s graduate scheme was a major milestone, and I now feel more prepared for the transition from university to industry. The skills I developed, such as working within a secure environment, handling critical infrastructure, and leading projects in an Agile setting, have positioned me well for future opportunities. Having hands-on experience in this sector has not only strengthened my technical and leadership skills but also given me the confidence to pursue roles in other high-stakes environments.



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Would you recommend doing a placement to others and what advice would you give?

A placement is an invaluable opportunity to gain real-world experience, develop industry-relevant skills, and build a professional network before graduating. It allows you to apply what you’ve learned at university to practical scenarios, helping you develop problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership skills that sometimes can’t be fully taught in a classroom. Beyond skill development, a placement can provide clarity on career direction by giving you first-hand exposure to different roles and industries and open doors for future opportunities. With four universities in Edinburgh alone, competition for graduate jobs is high. When employers compare applicants, they’re more likely to choose someone with a full year of relevant industry experience over someone without it. My advice would be to start looking early and be proactive. Placement opportunities can be competitive, so take the time to research companies, tailor your applications, and use university resources such as the Careers Team for CV reviews and interview preparation. Don’t be discouraged if a job description seems overwhelming because many placements are designed for students with little to no industry experience. Make sure that you highlight your willingness to learn and showcase transferable skills from university projects, extracurricular activities, part-time work, or other projects. Once in your placement, make the most of every opportunity, ask questions, take initiative, and get involved in projects outside your immediate role. Networking is key; connect with colleagues, attend industry events, and seek out mentors who can guide you. My biggest tip here is to say yes to everything, even if it is taking on a daunting task; it’s all experience. You’re there to learn. Finally, be adaptable and open to challenges. The skills, experience, and confidence you gain will make a huge difference when applying for graduate roles, and you might even receive an offer to go back to that company once you finish your degree.