Matthew Neat

**Condensed Matter CDT – Industrial Placement**

As part of my PhD with the Condensed Matter CDT at the University of St Andrews, I completed a three-month industrial placement with the Siemens Technology Accelerator (STA) in Munich. The Siemens Technology Accelerator is a small subsidiary of Siemens AG, which focuses on smaller intellectual property and start-up ventures that do not necessarily fit into the broader Siemens industrial portfolio.

I worked as an intern venture analyst in the Siemens STA group, working with two different venture managers on a range of small and large projects. Although the exact details of which are restricted due to a non-disclosure agreement, I can mention that I worked on projects ranging from solar power, wireless sensors and industrial system health to machine learning.

My role involved gathering, processing and presenting scientific, technical and economic information to the project venture managers, to help them make a decision on whether a particular idea is worth investing capital in. The projects allowed me explore the business and economic sides to industrial technology, rather than from a purely scientific approach. This crash course in business and economics will benefit me greatly, whether I remain in academia or not. The experience has made me appreciate industry much more as a potential career path and widened my perspective to help me be less myopically focused on scientific research.

On a more personal level, the opportunity to live abroad in Munich was fantastic. I had been learning German (relearning if my GCSE counts) and living away in Germany for three months has vastly improved my language skills. A turning point of which occurred when waiters in cafes and restaurants stopped responding to me in English whenever I spoke German. I would heartily recommend anybody who is learning a language in his or her free time to consider a placement in that country, to combine the work experience of the industrial placement with the immersion provided by living there.

Overall, I would heavily recommend others to take up an industrial placement during their PhD. Whether you know that you want to stay in academia or not, it is great life experience and will at least try and help you to figure out what you want to do after PhD. I’d like to thank the CDT for helping me arrange the placement and for supporting me whilst living in Munich, as well as Siemens for taking me on.

-Matthew Neat