Summary of my Working Experience at Willis Towers Watson

I have enjoyed this experience that has taught me a lot and would love to learn even more if I were lucky enough to have a chance to work for this company again. I have spent my third year, between stage two and three at Newcastle University working at the Willis Towers Watson, the third-largest insurance broker in the world. The skills gained during this year valued a lot for me as I succeeded in getting a job and working in the Technical Support field, in which I learnt how to fix hardware related issues and to change pieces of equipment. I also learnt to troubleshoot Windows 10 problems, learning more about drivers, BIOS settings and professional business-related software, and I also started creating my way in the Server Administration field. During the first six months, I worked in the second-line support team offering support to end-user issues that people in the Ipswich office had. In the second semester, I worked in the messaging team, the group which deals with Skype for business, emails and server sides operating on databases and the whole server system.

I had many duties during my probation period (which ended at the end of January), all these tasks were for me challenges to face since I had never carried out similar jobs, so I was completely new to this field. I uncovered a laptop for the first time discovering what was inside and I replaced hardware by myself for the first time just knowing only what to expect as a result and not much more. Most of the time, I received tickets with details of issues, then I needed to look for a solution and attempt many ways until the right one worked. It also happened that I had to contact my colleagues while investigating the issues to get as much information as possible to try to replicate errors or just to better understand them. I was then using my critical thinking skill, considering issues from a range of perspectives, drawing upon relevant information to make an informed assessment. I had to write every single detail on the ticket so me or my colleagues could always use the solution in case a similar error would have happened again. The user needed to be informed about the problem status, changes made, and how would have affected their job, so I had to write a sort of summary to close the case. I had to gather relevant information from a variety of sources. Usually, I searched in many forums possible solutions to the issues just to have more chances to get to the resolution, and I needed to present them in the form of a reasoned and well-written argument always keeping in mind the Willis Towers Watson values and the reliability of the service I was offering. Fortunately, I was in an excellent team where I could find all the support I needed in case of doubt since almost always I had first to find solutions to problems and then use that solution every time the same issues occurred, so an expert help shorted my answer times.

In IT I worked with many people who were part of different groups. My services were addressed to everyone, including people working to other line of business. That's because I did not only offer software-related support doing troubleshooting, but I also had the tools and the duty of changing pieces of hardware, replacing the laptop if it was too old/slow with a new one or calling Dell if the device was on warranty for repairing it with a technician. I also handed over new equipment people ordered after I collected it from the post. When a user needed a new piece of hardware, they could order it using the intranet, after their manager approval or they could come to me and I could place an order on their behalf. Any issue or anything users required, they had to raise a ticket using the intranet portal and me or one my colleagues would have helped. I had to check whether to place an order or not as their manager did because I could order hardware only if the item were needed to avoid unnecessary expenses. Moreover, I had to check if the thing was already in stock so I could hand over the piece from the storage. The skill I practised the most was the decision making as I always had to ponder the pros and cons of all the possibilities considering solutions and opportunities to make a conscious choice based on research and reasoning. I had to think whether to order new hardware or to repair the old one and when calling Dell, I had to ask a quote for the repair and comparing to the price of a new one for the company. I've been monitoring expenses to present my manager evaluated and planned expenditure since he was the one who always had to approve or deny every budgeting choices.

To solve an issue, hand over equipment or repair/replace hardware, I could operate remotely via Skype when possible, or I had to schedule a meeting with customers online or to my or their desk. If their laptop was required for a long time, I could issue a loan laptop which was a numbered, and registered laptop people could borrow for a limited amount of time (less than a month) that could have hosted their data after a registration. For this reason, I had to backup users' data before any operation, so in the case of fatalities, documents were

saved. Everyone was advised to keep their files on the server folders, but it was prevalent for people to save documents on the desktop or folders on the hard drive.

From July to November there were new hires almost once per week. For any new member, Reigate depot used to send us the equipment the joiner's manager ordered. Usually, kits included a bag (backpack, rucksack or handbag) and the laptop that might have been the traveller, a 13 inches laptop very light made for been easily carried around; the classic working laptop 15 inches or the computer for developers which was bigger and with more performing hardware. Managers of the new hire could also order additional equipment such as docking station to replace tower pc or old docks if they needed to update their desks or they could have added new keyboard or mouse and monitors. The depot once received the order used to send pieces as soon as they had it in stock, so it happened that they arrived in different days sometimes even after the joiner arrived. I always had to gather them since after collecting the post I had to search for every item number in our system to know who the owner of that hardware was and then I had to be sure if it was a new person or a colleague. I always planned in advance to be sure I had every hardware when it was needed, and I didn't have to run after them contacting depot asking if they had sent the pieces, looking if someone else already collected it or track the order. I preferred to use personal enterprise and stock them in the IT room when double items arrived or when someone didn't need the item ordered so for emergencies I had one to hand over without the colleague to wait for it, excelling in customer satisfaction. People had the chance to leave me feedback, and I always received positive ones. That was all the time a friendly and motivational achievement as when it happened I received an email from my manager with the name of the person who gave me the feedback, a sort of rating and a comment. Being among other managers and other colleagues with a positive comment accompanied by congratulations from my manager was keeping my morale up. Sometimes things went wrong and people had to repair some pieces of hardware if for example, they had a swollen battery by accident or a screen blinking or not working or as sometimes it happened the cooling system didn't perform fine. If the laptop was still in warranty, I could have called Dell at a particular number to talk to a technician. After being sure and tried all the possible fixes, when the problem was apparent and identified Dell used to send another technician with a brand-new piece of hardware for replacing the faulty one.

If the laptop was not in warranty, and it had a hardware issue like a fan not working anymore, or like a couple of cases I handled personally of two distinct users who spilt water or other liquids on their laptop resulting in one a keyboard not working and the other user the whole laptop to be replaced.
If the hardware was damaged like on the cases above, the user itself had to pay for the equipment. People do not always expect or understand it moreover when it comes to talking about money, so in those cases, a perfect mastering of the language would have been useful. I practised my fluency a lot by talking every day to people, explaining issues and resolution, giving directions via skype or phone. I learnt to exchange opinions politely, respecting others, and to deal with people who were not gentle or who were angry or in a hurry. Exchanging ideas and information using various methods appropriate to the situation has been the key to succeeding when working with many teams and when talking to people from different backgrounds and lines of business. If the hardware was too damaged but the price for repairing it was higher than the price of a new piece, I had to order a brand new one directly from the depot. There were certain conditions of course if, for example, the laptop was too slow just because it was full, or the operating system was too slow I had been given a USB stick with a new version of Windows 10 for performing updates.

After how to use the ticket system for helping people, one of the first things my manager taught me was how to perform an upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10. The most significant changes that the Willis Towers Watson needed to complete from July onwards was the migration to a new version of the operating system for all the users. New joiners were already using Windows 10, but many already existing colleagues were not. I have been given a USB with a custom version of Windows 10. I had first to back up all the user's data: I could do it manually by copying folders one by one and transferring them into the private user folder stored on the server, or I could do it using a WTW software that automatically compressed all the user's data into a format that the software itself could use to restore the copy to the new pc. During my first six months, I received more new USB sticks with every time a most up to date OS. As soon as I knew the backup was successful, I had to boot the laptop using the installation drive. Then some scripts were executed for updating the BIOS, updating drivers and installing a fresh copy of Windows. After this, an interface asked me for the user's full

name to personalise it with time zone, keyboard and essential software including the ones required from the user's line of business; Outlook email, Skype and other personal accounts are already set up during the installation, only a log in for the intranet was required.

To fulfil my potential, I had to take responsibilities for all my action, to learn how to do things right avoiding mistakes since other user's data were involved. This job has been an infinite source of knowledge as I always had to learn from others, from guides my colleagues were giving me, from the internet or directly shadowing my colleagues. I've been an active learner all year long. I also did some courses that were related to the internal policy of the Willis Towers Watson. Those courses were about WTW values which are client focus, teamwork, respect, excellence and integrity. Taking part to those courses were useful to master the ability to find information using various resources, to then collect and combine them to complete some training including the DPPIST and the Privacy and Data Protection courses using my information literacy skill.

Responding readily to changing situations and priorities was significant to my job because my IT position required me to do so many different works that covered spread areas. For explaining better, one of my other duties was storing the equipment incoming daily in the basement storage where there were stocks of almost every piece of hardware. To access the locked room, the security required a signed form so you could get the keys. Keeping pace with all the tasks often not related one to the other required me strong adaptability.

Every day I was required to collect the post. There was a room which was the company post office where I could have both shipped items or received them. Every piece I received was either single, so there was a label with the recipient on it or was inside a crate. If the hardware was inside a container, the name contained a code which was the ticket number. When searching the number inside a specific intranet portal, all the required information was displayed including who ordered the objects and what pieces I was expected to receive. Then one of my colleagues on the early days showed me how to create templates on Outlook for contacting users without every time having to type the message; I just needed to insert the address. The email used to say to come to my desk for the item collection. I needed to optimise the collection process as much as possible, so I used my creativity for reducing the times. I innovated the way of approaching the collection so I reserved a space next to my counter where I could have left the items with the name displayed easy to read so the user when ready had only to pass and grab the object without even asking. I'm delighted I found innovative solutions for optimising small processes because also after I changed team, I saw that my colleagues were still doing the same.

I wrote a different email ready for every piece of hardware (headsets, keyboard, mouse, bags), but when people ordered a new laptop, everything was different. New laptops were ordered if the one my colleagues were using were too slow, old or damaged. When the new one arrived, I had to schedule the handover with the owner, and then I had to pass (after creating a backup) all the data, programs and files to the new device and I had to be sure everything was copied and working. After testing it, my team used to keep old laptops for some weeks in case old users needed files from them. After the predetermined time, we always sent them back to the depot logged with a filled form giving details about it.

When I had to send laptops or tower computers to the depot, I had to be sure I sealed them into the crate with fillings for avoiding accidental damage being also sure the total value of the shipping was under a threshold. Then I had to send an email to one of my colleagues working at the depot with the details of the crate with the serial number (asset tag), owner, date when it has been handed to us, and what model the laptop was and then the warranty expire date. I have posted two boxes in October, and one in November and one in December. Every time I had to use my numeracy skill to manipulate crates by laptop values to ship as many laptops as possible filling all the boxes with the right notebooks in the right container for not exceeding the threshold but sending as many as I could. Another discriminant I had to take into consideration when sending crates is that often I had to ship other items on them because it also happens that people order monitors for replacing their older or smaller ones which I had to dismount for making space to the brand new ones. Monitors that were not too old gave me the possibility to remove the screen from the base so I could save space and fill a crate with only displays and a box with only stands for reducing the space required.

Another one of the significant pieces of work completed has been the replacement of all the Windows 7 machines with new Windows 10 ones. Since after ten years, support for Windows 7 ended on January, Willis Towers Watson planned to update all the Operating Systems of the laptop in good conditions or to replace the old ones with a new model. First, I had to collect all the old notebooks from the users when they were about to leave for the day. I had a list of users per each day. Then I had to ask what kind of software they were using on their daily job, so I knew what data to backup/restore and what software they needed after the update. After I asked if they also had any particular data to back up and filling the form my colleagues updated the OS during the night so on the following working day, I had the chance to deliver the new one (or updated) after profiling it. For profiling a laptop, I had to ask the user to log in and then we could see if the computer was correctly mapped to the server, so there was all the drive linked and connected and the printers as well. Every laptop I backed up and restored, after setting up email and other accounts I had to take the responsibility of users' data because all the credentials, applications data and temporary files were as important as documents since the colleague needed all the same settings he was using for not having any impact at all. Sometimes users required to change OS earlier than their scheduled time if for example there were software issues. It happened that the migration had some problems, so I had my USB boot drive with the most up-to-date custom version of Windows operating system installer, and I've been taught how to do the whole procedure myself. For migrating overnight, my colleagues used a big room provided with many desks equipped with a laptop charger and a LAN cable for connecting the laptop to the network. Every desk originally had a cabled and working tower computer so for each of them I had to unplug all the cables and get ready as many workstations with all the right wires grouped to be used straight away. This process usually took a few hours as it needed to configure the whole system and drives.

Even if the migrations were performed during the night, my colleagues were busy with this project all day long. It was likely that I was working alone in the Technical Support area on my own. I gained a high independence learning how to work without supervision or input from others, using self-motivation, my personal knowledge and skills to achieve goals. I still had to deal with everyday people's issues, so if users were having problems, they could call me via skype, or they could come to my team area where Tech Support was located. If they preferred assistance without leaving their desk, I could take remote control of their devices without the necessity for them to bring their laptop to my office or I could have arranged a meeting at their desk for problem-solving. Customers usually opened tickets with all the details so I could already know what the issue was and then starting investigating. If they contacted me directly, I had to open the ticket with the details, including problems and resolution attempts in case someone else would have used the same hints or if the problems appeared again. In every case, taking the initiative was the first step to solve any issue since I always had to initiate actions to make relevant signs of progress on tasks without being prompted by others. Problems typically were on Microsoft office software, users being locked out from their accounts, synchronisation issues, files wrongly moved or deleted from server folders and loan laptops to borrow. Sometimes new hire or other colleagues needed to install software not included inside our Software Center through the intranet so since for installing they required an admin password, they were coming to my desk for my credentials. All the users also have the possibility to work from home connecting to the network using a VPN, but it needed to be configured following some guided steps.

I always had to identify critical issues for action and consider implications, to create appropriate solutions because what it could have been easy for me, for sure it was not for some type of users so even if the procedure was step by step guided and easy to follow I had to provide assistance giving my confidence with these actions. Moreover, I had on my desk a router from which I could simulate an external connection without being connected to the WTW network and without boundaries and restrictions. People could plug their laptop to this modem and try to log in for testing if they understood the login process and for testing their device. My colleagues could also order equipment to be shipped home just by inserting their address when making the request. One of the most common issues to analyse with my problem-solving skill was performance issues or the necessity to upgrade the audio driver or the BIOS to improve the compatibility with the headset supplied or to overcome BSOD or laptop freezing. The ability to critically evaluate and analyse complex situations and tasks resulted in being the one I used most of the time.

Francesco Galassi Student No 170492959

I have always been learning lessons from colleagues and the web for dealing with many categories of errors since there were several types of tickets: incident, when something was not working; general question/advice, for software support or even for faulty hardware and hardware request for buying equipment. I have also been taught how to replace RAM, SSD, Battery or call DELL for scheduling a meeting with a technician for a replacement. When calling DELL, I had to explicit the issue and gave them my contact details using the phonetic alphabet. During this time, I not only perfect my writing skill for sending professional and polite emails, skype messages and writing on tickets but I also learnt the phonetic alphabet for doing the spelling of my name, email address and office address. I also improved my fluency and oral skills since I had to speak to my colleagues, to customers and to every person I interacted with while working in a way that the audience can understand, to provide the information they need.

While working on one of my projects, I gained experience helping during the London office migration to Windows 10. There I practice my confidence on doing Windows 10 troubleshooting and troubleshooting Office 365 since Skype and Outlook were the most used app. Some of the things I learnt were to restore reception of new messages in Exchange Cached mode, to refresh Windows computer policies, how to install business software and tools like SmartView or Power BI and how to use credential manager. It was common for people travelling around in different offices for working reasons and that's why I spent a week-long fantastic experience in London office. I assisted users after the migration as I did in the Ipswich office. Every morning I received a list of users migrated to the up to date OS and I had to offer my assistance contacting them via Skype Calls or remotely. It's been a solemn responsibility taking care of their daily job being sure the migration had little impact on their work. Some of them kept contacting me for other issues even when I returned to Ipswich because they were satisfied with my job.

When back to the Ipswich office, I helped with another project. WTW in Ipswich has two building, the main one and another one where there were mainly archives and other kinds of offices.
There I managed to replace desktop computers for all the users who required an upgrade of their workspace. I used to bring there two monitors (o a single one if theirs was good) along with their docking station, laptop and all the cables with mouse and keyboard. Then with a platform trolley, I brought back all the old equipment. Once my manager gave me the duty of replacing more than ten switchboards stations in that building. I had to remove all the material there and install two 22 inches monitors per each workspace with a dock and mouse, and keyboard all plugged in and ready to be used. All the equipment not in acceptable conditions or not working has been recycled, but the good one brought to the basement where the IT had storage (from where I could get the equipment needed for doing these replacement operations.)

During these six months of work at the Technical Support team, I always looked for occasions to improve my personal enterprise. I had chances to seek out and take advantage of opportunities the Willis offered to improve myself and my situation. I took part in meetings and discussions more about of economic matters but also some update courses, and conferences for IT subjects like the Windows upgrade I performed. I have also been lucky to join a fantastic team and company which provided me with opportunities for socialising after work at the pub or organised activities like wine tasting sessions. These were excellent opportunities for creating interpersonal relationships and having some fun like when before the Christmas holidays I took part in a raffle, a quiz and bingo with the whole IT department where I could win tech prizes. That has been great since I almost worked along and spent time with all the line of business, allowing me to master my interpersonal skills to listen actively and know how to behave to relate to others.

Before leaving the team and going for some Christmas holiday, I decided to boost the relationships I built with my team members taking time to develop and maintain connections with others by considering their needs, sharing ideas and building trust. I decided to give everyone a Christmas card with positive thoughts and wishing, sharing feedback and thanking them for their support, everything they taught me.

From January, I changed the area, and I passed from the IT Support team to the messaging team.
Before I officially ended my probation period, my manager from IT Support showed me a company portal from the intranet where I had to summarise the experience I had up to then. I had to display my job done, adding feedback I received from users I helped and also stating how I behaved and interacted with my colleagues in compliance with the company values.

Francesco Galassi Student No 170492959

In this second semester, I had the responsibility to amend Skype addresses of those colleagues who had it different from their email address, being sure that users had as fewer problems as possible keeping working efficiently and regularly.

Teamworking would have been more demanding since I would have been working with a third level support team dedicated to unified communications, so everything related to messaging aspects including emails, calls, Outlook, Teams, Skype, working with others to set and achieve shared goals.

To perform my tasks, I needed some rights and permissions to operate in the server, so I had to wait a couple of weeks before I received all the administrative powers to read and write data in the server. During these first days, I've been shadowing one of my messaging team new manager's colleagues, and he taught me some basics of server administration. He showed me how to interact with the user interface, where to go for looking for users addresses and data. This messaging team member along with my new manager also explained to me how the Exchange Servers work giving me some knowledge about protocols, pools. They also showed me how the Active Directory works, how Groups, emails and Skype for business are managed. They also introduced me to the Skype for business server console, the tool I would have used most of the time from then. With my manager, I set up some goals to achieve during the last six months of my placement year. I had to break an overall objective down into smaller tasks and work out how much time and resource will be needed to complete each part. We decided to set an objective to keep track of all the people I would have changed during this time. Another aim to record the people I helped and finally, the last one for what I would have learnt including the initial knowledge about cloud and exchange server, Microsoft Teams application of which I needed to learn about the administration along with some Microsoft Server administration knowledge. I needed to keep track regularly of my goals and actions, writing how I was performing, and I also had to ask for reviews and feedback when I was helping people and changing their addresses. I needed to submit a request to users I helped to receive constructive feedback.

Since I was learning how servers work when I was studying the Microsoft Teams administration, how Teams interact with the Active Directory, how a cloud server work and how Azure communicates with on-premise servers I decided to keep learning for the MTA server administration I started studying when I still didn't have the tools to operate. One of my future plans for sure is to take the Exam 98-365 Windows Server Administration Fundamentals as soon as I am back to Newcastle again. The colleague I was shadowing introduced me to these certifications, so I decided to search online for some guides, some tutorials for having some reference on where to start.

My manager extracted from the database a list of users whose Skype address is different from their email address. The addresses were ordered alphabetically, but I could filter them according to their business office. I received the order not to contact VIP users (I had a list of VIP colleagues), the ones who had so many meetings and appointments that have sort of secretaries. When changing a user's Skype address, the person needed to log in again with the new address and moreover they needed to replace the address in the meeting they had organised. So, my job would have been easier if I could have known the number of appointments people had in order to reduce the impact of the change in their daily work. Unfortunately, there were no ways of getting users meetings list; I've been in contact with some colleagues from the US and other offices in the UK for a solution, but nothing came up. I picked Ipswich office from the list of all the users with the address to be changed so I could have assisted them if they needed help.

First, I learnt how to use the Skype Server Console. I amended my skype address to determine the procedure and to know better what effects it would have had after the change so I could practice avoiding errors with other people. To be more conscious about the impact after the modification, I created some meetings, and after changing the username, I saw it didn't variate on the URL of meetings already set up, so the link was broken. Since I was getting disconnected from skype for about 20 minutes after every address change, I thought it was good to write a how-to guide for helping users logging in again after their address has been changed. I changed the guide I wrote many times during the months I worked in that team. Every time I was changing the manual was for adding more suggestions and more details but at the same time keeping it easy to understand and reducing all the jargon and tech terms. At the beginning I created a step by step guide with

screenshots, then I decided to divide it in two different guides, one for logging in and a second one for changing meetings hyperlink and for other issues polishing them with the feedback and suggestions received.

There could have been several problems after every address change that's why it was fundamental to be in contact with all the users for guiding them through all the process. As soon as I changed the address, the user got disconnected from Skype for about 15 minutes then they just had to update their address from the application, and then my guides were useful. If they created meetings, they had to replace their old address with the new address; moreover, all the Voicemail messages were deleted during the process. Servers usually needed sometimes to replicate because all the addresses are hosted in different pools depending on the user's office location, so people were resulting as offline in Skype and Outlook application. I discovered this when a user got back to me saying his status was "unknown" because the Outlook offline address book needed to be updated. I inserted on the guide a section for fixing this manually for accelerating the process otherwise the server would have solved it after few hours. Since I already knew that people were attempting doing the login, reconnection, meeting amendment and address book refreshing by themselves without reading the guide, I decided to summarise them when contacting them for the first time via email just saying that I needed to amend their address and not to make any change at that time. I also summarised them when contacting them via Skype messages, and I thought to add troubleshooting tips if something went wrong.

For contacting my colleagues, I created some email templates that I improved at every office location change. I added my working hours when I amended Mumbai users because the time zone and our working hours were different. For this reason, I used to schedule meeting with Mumbai users for the following day, so I could first inform them of the change, then when they were offline I was making the changes so when they were online again I could offer support. I picked Mumbai as the second office to migrate since after completing the pilot office I created a pivot table to know how many users to amend there were in all these different offices to modify the ones with more users. I asked my manager some contact from local IT to send the guides for helping the migration in case they needed help and for being sure they knew that I was changing users at their office.

I also translated the messages when contacting users via skype (in Italian for example) because both my email and chat messages were explaining that I was from the messaging team in Ipswich and that I was contacting them because their email address was different from their Skype SIP address. Since the company was passing from onsite servers to cloud servers, there was a necessity to amend it. I warned them to listen to voicemail messages before the change and also that they would have needed to modify meetings they created. I also reminded them that their status would appear as offline to the people who saved her address into a contact list before the server replication. I was doing this because I needed their permission and because they needed to know every implications and impact on their daily job on the short and long period. If they agreed, I always wished them a good day and sent their local IT Support contact details.

I often had issues with some people who didn't read my messages at all or paying enough attention as they were changing their address on the app without even notifying that to me, so they were without skype connection for long because on the server it was still set as the wrong and old value although it was clearly stated that I had to do the change on the server first on all my messages. I also made myself some mistakes, for example, once I had to amend two users with the same name, but with different usernames and I wrongly mixed them up. I solved this mistake but sometimes when users were contacting me with unexpected errors like calendars or shared mailboxes, not syncing or other connectivity problems, I had to ask for help. My reference always was my manager, but if he was busy, I also had some other colleagues contact to write to for any necessity. The collaboration was fundamental in my job. For example, I also have often been approached from local IT support for taking actions that required messaging team tools for Exchange or VPN issues since we were sharing tasks based on personal strengths of group members. If clients were having problems that I was not able to solve because, for example, they were not related to the address change, I usually opened a ticket. I received messages for users who had issues to connect to the VPN, others with emails stuck to outbox, others who were not able to access the intranet having problems related to the Legacy Browser Support. Even an IT support team member from Mumbai contacted me as he had issues at accessing the Active Directory and Service Now. Another user was not able to receive External calls anymore; another one when sending a message or when calling received the error messages: "we cannot connect to Exchange;" a user had problems

accessing some shared mailboxes with her team, receiving the error: "cannot expand the folder. Microsoft exchange is currently busy."

For these kinds of problems, since changing values to the server may bring to interruption of services, if I was not sure, I always have preferred asking for help if I thought it wasn't safe improvising. Teamworking has been very important to my work since I learnt almost all the techniques just looking at my colleagues working. An example is when I was amending users belonging to the Mumbai office, and the server threw an error when I was using the Skype Console stating that the phone number saved did not correspond to the one on AD, or it was exceeding the allowed amount of characters or because it was a duplicate. However, the issue was that I changed only the Skype address without changing any other field and without amending any phone value but the error was about phone number. For this matter, I worked along with my manager and other messaging colleagues since the error came out frequently, but at the beginning, we were not sure how to solve it. The first successful attempt was leaving the phone number field empty; then the server should have synced automatically with the Active Directory, but it did not, so we decided to leave the field blank, or we just removed the extension to keep the number in a format the Skype console would accepted it. Mumbai users also had other issues with phone numbers since I noticed that their numbers on the AD and the address book were not matching with the one showed on Skype for Business Server. It was not a case since many users had this issue. It happened that I had users with similar name or username, so I used to check also the phone number if it was matching for being sure to change the right one because once I picked a user that had the same name and similar username, but it wasn't the one I had to change. With users from Mumbai, I had to be extra careful because sometimes they had phone number not matching, but since the SIP address was the right one and the person was the right one as well, I concluded the number written on the server was not correct, but the person was the right one. I needed to do everything right also because I had a different shift from them because of the different time zones, so in case something was wrong, I was not always online at the same time.

For this reason, I worked quite many days extra hours for Mumbai users (and Italian users too, different time zone again) because I would never let a user alone after the migration assisting them for every kind of issues, sometimes also scheduling an appointment using Outlook Calendar to be sure to dedicate them the right amount of time without any distractions. Once I also helped a user who was not able to log in when he was operating using a virtual machine. Every time he logged off from the VM, the Skype application was always forgetting the new address and proposing the old one. I just had to clear windows credential manager passwords, but it wasn't that easy because the virtual machine needed some of them, so I searched online which was the right field to remove for fixing this error and then he never had to insert the new address. As my manager explained me, the company allocates virtual machines for distributing traffic better. In this way people could have used a machine that was in the office or a virtual one on the server without any filter, without any restriction due to the VPN. For example, I was following tutorials via YouTube on the Teams application management but since YouTube is blocked from the company for reducing traffic when connected to the server, I had to disconnect to the VPN for accessing the website or I had to download the video offline. My manager told me that I could have requested a VM for studying on YouTube while working on the server using folders and files.

At first, I changed Ipswich users, using the address of IT members as guinea pigs, and indeed, some errors we didn't know came out. For example, after every change, there was the necessity of resetting the Voicemail since it was linked to the old wrong address. For reducing the user interaction, I got in contact with one of my manager's colleagues who taught me how to change the voicemail address field on the AD without the need of turning it off and on again and without the necessity of asking the user to complete any further steps. In Ipswich, I kept going to users' desks for helping them face to face as I did when I was at tech support. Sometimes when walking on different floors, people were stopping me asking for help related to everyday issues including PCs being slow, emails, devices, mouse and keyboards. I had to help a user who had the address changed, but when changing meeting, they still did not work. In the offices there also are meeting rooms where people can have video calls just by booking the room using Outlook. Then they can connect to Skype using their laptop, or they can use a piece of hardware that allows clients to connect to that call from anywhere even just dialling a number. It happened that the software of the specific piece of equipment that

Francesco Galassi Student No 170492959

the room the lady having issues used had a bug. So, if that room was used and then the address changed, meetings in that room were not able to be replaced. When still able to work in the office, I also helped user setting up the mobile Skype application since the company provides a business phone and sometimes users needed help connecting their private phone to the network through the Wi-Fi and needed help configuring applications or changing the address after the migration.

Another situation to mention is when I received a call from one of my colleagues from the messaging team asking if I could assist an Ipswich colleague who had her address on the Active Directory written not correctly compared to the one in the Exchange/Skype Server. Her address on the Active Directory was not matching the Skype one, so her status was always displayed as offline, causing her some issues. I helped her for the migration since after I changed the address, the user must have followed the guides for getting online again after some minutes and for avoiding having the Skype status set to "unknown" for too long. I have also sent her the guides for fixing meetings URL if she created any and for telling her about the voicemail messages automatic deletion after the migration.

When changing Italian offices, it was not like Ipswich or Mumbai office because on the HR database all the Italian colleagues were registered as to be all in the same office in Bologna they were spread all over Italy from the north to the south in a dozen of offices. They had three IT Technical support teams working in the main offices, Milan, Rome and Turin but serving all the offices. Even if they were across Italy, I decided to amend them regardless of their business office location since I could have also used my first language. Italian IT support members were the one who contacted me the most because I amended so many users from all their offices. I loved working with all those three offices because I got in contact with people working for the same company but all around the world having the possibility to speak, write and understand many accents and intonation for improving my languages skills. Some Italian users were not very expert with IT and with the English language, so they were often asking me to summarise the guides even more in Italian. I decided to call all the people who were having some difficulties for briefly explaining when it was needed to do. I tried to prepare in advance what to say for keeping the call time as low as possible. I was able to make calls to phone numbers and that has been useful since it allowed me to dial numbers for contacting users all over the world.

Another Italian IT Support team's member contacted me because one of the users I migrated wasn't receiving missed call notifications/emails anymore, and she was receiving the message "conversation history was disabled by the system administrator." By our internal policy, conversation history is always disabled for everyone, while about the missed calls not correctly notified, I decided to contact my manager. For solving this issue, I told the technician to check the version of Skype because it might have needed an update to the latest version. I also pointed out that users can save conversations clicking CTRL+S. They solved the issue because someone from Technical Support wrongly edited the host file and then it was in conflict with skype, so the issue was resolved by bringing the changes back. For this, my manager explained that if I needed the host file commented out to get rid of the Autodiscover entry, then there was now a package in Software Centre to do that. Autodiscover is used to find the entry point to Skype when connecting using the desktop client, and once their mailbox is migrated to Office 365, this entry is no longer needed causing problems. I used the procedure above when another member of the Italian support contacted me as a user when setting automatic replies up from Outlook was received the error "Server Currently Unavailable." Looking for a solution online I read the issue might have been caused by proxies or policies, so I thought to use the Auto Discover Hosts File – Remove tool. He didn't know about this tool, but it did not work, so I told him to raise a ticket addressing it to the messaging team.

It also happened that I needed support from them. Since when I contacted people, I was always using the same sentences repeatedly just personalising them with the email address and Skype ID. For automating this a little, I wanted to use the clipboard tool, but I had an old Windows 10 version that did not allow me to reuse my copy-paste history. I talked to my manager about this problem, and he suggested to raise a ticket since upgrading OS even remotely because of the corona virus would not have been really hard to perform. I went to the intranet for searching support, I used the instant chat and someone from support opened a ticket from me telling me to wait for anything new. Then I have been contacted by one of the managers who interviewed me when getting this job. I didn't expect that, but I've been pleased to hear from him after this long time.

Working in this company allowed me to expand my knowledge in many other fields. I started this job with a precise aim in mind. I wanted to get experience about support and hardware that were two fields in which I wasn't expert. I took this as a chance for learning something new not included in my knowledge from the university. During these six months, I took part in seminars and lessons about economic topics since Willis Towers Watson is mainly a risk management, insurance brokerage and advisory company. I have done some tests on anti-bribery & corruption rules and the Willis Towers Watson values. The courses I did for getting the certification were about "Anti-Bribery and Corruption; Gifts, Entertainment, and Hospitality; and Third-Party Bribery Risk." On this second semester for keeping learning about servers' administration, my manager sent me some links of resources I could have used for studying technical topics about the Microsoft Teams app administration to include in my Microsoft Server administration studies. I plan to finish my studies and practice it in a virtual machine for simulating a server during the summer to be sure to succeed on the exam.

I am very thankful for being introduced to this opportunity for knowing more about servers also because I alternated addresses exchanges to days of study. My main work was to change address, and I succeeded in my goal of doing at least ten addresses changed per day since I managed to migrate three business areas correctly: Ipswich office, Mumbai office and all the Italian offices for a total of 1009 addresses changed. Completing this significant piece of work has been one of the greatest achievements of these months.

During this year I also created some friends with other students from my course who were doing their placement in cities close to Ipswich allowing me to spend some time with them and also giving me the chance to increase my programming skills since we took part to a hackathon during a weekend when there was the lockdown. During these last months, because of the virus, I have been working from home. It has been a new experience for me that I enjoyed. Of course, it was not the same than working in the office since I didn't have all the comforts like an ergonomic chair, the restaurant or the break areas with vending machines, teas and coffees or the electronic desks that were possible to set the height to work standing like the ones that are on the third-floor lab at the computer science campus. I loved my office also because all the working stations were agile, so there wasn't a fixed spot, but I could have worked on any free desk. I was working in the "swimming pool" an area reserved for IT on the ground floor along with the security area, HR and post room. The first floor was all agile, and almost all the tables were with height-adjustable systems. The second floor was similar to the first one, but seats were less agile, and on the last floor there was a restaurant service with a costa shop and a roof garden. Each floor also had its meeting rooms.

To overcome the difficulties created by the necessity of working from home, Willis Towers Watson gave to all the colleagues the laptop, a monitor and all the cables useful including the keyboard, mouse and chargers. Despite the period of isolation I managed to build some relationship with my colleagues in particular with my manager taking time to develop and maintain connections with others by considering their needs, sharing ideas and building trust also thanks to the fact that we have had a weekly meeting. During these meetings every Tuesday, we shared what happened during the week and any news or event relevant to us. I succeeded in my work helped by my manager, who met my needs, also by the messaging team members. I also managed to get in contact with some members of the company on LinkedIn for creating a network of people with I worked and interacted, including some Italian members with I chatted when changing their addresses.

Despite all the difficulties and unexpected outcome of this 2020, I enjoyed this work opportunity so much. I applied to this job intending to expand the work possibilities my degree could offer me. I mainly wanted to learn more about hardware and tech support. I not only succeeded in this but I also learnt more about server side engineering and administration, and I gained confidence with the English language since I moved to a new town challenging my comfort zone and also because I spent most of my working time chatting with people via Skype and personally. I am sure the combination of all the skills I gained, and practices will offer me a good chance for a bright future. I also created a network of people inside a very prestigious company which has high standard policies and values I enjoyed a lot. I would enjoy working in this company again, and I would also like to work with both the UK offices and colleagues and the Italian ones as I did this second semester.

Francesco Galassi Student No 170492959