

Reflections of a college technician

Developing the pipeline of future technician talent – the Modern Apprenticeship route.

The apprenticeship programme (Foundation, Modern and Graduate) is sometimes the preferred route for career development for many young people. This article finds out why one young person decided on the Modern Apprenticeship route to becoming a Science Technician in a Scottish College.

I am an Apprentice Science Technician at Dundee and Angus College. Before commencing this role at Dundee and Angus College, I was a pupil in S5 at Dunfermline High School, studying towards my Highers. I felt the best choice was not to complete S6 and go to university but instead apply for a Modern Apprenticeship in a field that I had a genuine interest in. This would allow me to build on my knowledge of the subjects I enjoyed at school within the workplace and earn whilst learning at the same time.

Leaving full-time education to progress to full time education elsewhere did not fill me with enthusiasm. I always felt I was a more of a 'hands on' learner and would gain more knowledge from experience instead of purely academic learning in a classroom. Whilst at school, I studied all STEM subjects (Maths, Engineering Science, Physics, Human Biology, and Chemistry), which I felt I had the most interest in

The decision to leave school at the end of S5, having completed my Highers, was an easy one as I did not see the need to stay for S6, having achieved good results to apply for an apprenticeship. I felt that staying at school would have been counterproductive, and I was keen to enter the workplace. I decided that the decision to seek a career in a STEM field would be what I would get the most enjoyment.

With this in mind, I applied for some apprenticeships and was successful in progressing to the recruitment stages for a couple, but when it came to choosing the right kind of apprenticeship, I had to think carefully about which one I would select as the wrong choice could have potentially resulted in being in a job I hated for the next 3 or 4 years. Therefore, it was really important for me to take the necessary time to consider what career path I would get the most enjoyment out of. After careful consideration, I decided a career in Science appealed to me most rather than a career in Engineering. Therefore, I was really keen to take up the offer to join Dundee and Angus College as a Science Technician whilst also completing a level 3 MA in Life Sciences.

The role of a Science Technician is very varied, meaning that no two days of work are the same. When working as a science technician, there is such a large requirement for versatility as the courses run at the college are all different and have different aspects, e.g. you may need



to prepare solutions, growth cultures, acids and bases, growth media etc., and prepare labs for all practical work done in the college, so you are seldom bored. Technicians have so much responsibility within an education centre, keeping the fluidity of practical work and even often carrying out demonstrations. The technician team is also solely responsible for care of the Chemical Storeroom which is a very big responsibility due to all hazardous material being stored within. Maintaining equipment is also a very big part of a technician's role whether it's calibrating or repairing. A technician's job is to ensure equipment is always in working order before going out for labs.

Going to SSERC for the Safety in Microbiology course, I went in with the expectation that it would help to consolidate further what I already knew about microbiology from working in the lab at college; this expectation was met with the bonus of improving my confidence in the lab and providing proof of knowledge which will help towards completing my SVQ which is a competency-based qualification which is part of my apprenticeship. I would recommend completing SSERC courses for any Modern Apprentice working towards an SVQ as it helps endorse the practical skills you will learn as part of your Modern Apprenticeship.

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