Apprentice Case Study

Scientific - Bliss McLuckie

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My name is Bliss McLuckie and I am 17 years old. I am in my second year as a scientific apprentice and work for National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) based in Workington. I wanted to become a scientific apprentice as I have always been interested in science and maths. I didn't want to stay on at school as I wanted a hands-on-job and knew I can still go to Uni when I've finished my apprenticeship. Two of my brothers came to GEN II a few years ago, one as an electrician and one on a mechanical apprenticeship so I knew about the company.

Explain the process of applying

I applied through Connexions like everyone else and completed the aptitude test. I was then interviewed by GEN II but also by other employers as you go straight to the employers on the scientific scheme, rather than being in the centre for the first year.

What were your first few months like?

When I first started I did a week induction at the ENERGUS building. I did a short scientific induction at Sellafield and then in the October I started with my employer, NNL. When I arrived at NNL I was shown around and given a short induction to the company and what they did. I was the only apprentice in my building. Where I work we test cement and other materials from around the Sellafield site to check if they are within specification. During my first few months I learned how to carry out various lab tests.

So what sort of training have you done during your scientific apprenticeship?

It is mainly laboratory work. I run lots of different lab tests – the sort of tests I am doing at the moment are moisture tests, loss on ignition and fineness tests. Doing a loss on ignition test for example would involve me weighing the powder and placing in a furnace for a set amount of time, I take the weight before and after and record the data in a lab book.

I also do product quality tests which is where I make up different products like cubes and prisms from moulds to test them over a period of 90 days to see how they change.

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What academic studies do you do?

Last year I did my NVQ Level 2 in Laboratory and associated technical activities and am pleased to say that I passed all of my college work with distinctions. I am now doing my level 3. The sort of units in my level 3 qualification are things like health and safety, working with other, carryout testing operations, assessing data and producing report and carrying out investigations.

What do you intend to do when you finish your apprenticeship?

I would like to carry on working with my employer and become a full qualified laboratory technician.

What would you advise someone who is thinking of becoming a scientific apprentice?

If you are really interested in sciences then the scientific apprenticeship is the right one for you. I was a bit nervous when I started as I was only 16 and it was my first job and I didn't really know what to expect but it has been really good. This apprenticeship is different to most of the other GEN II apprenticeships as you tend to work in labs and it doesn't involve any of the engineering training that the other apprentices do. I have no regrets becoming a scientific apprentice.

GEN II

To apply for a GEN II Apprenticeship visit the online recruitment portal at www.gen2training.co.uk

Apprentice Case Study

Scientific - Joanne Beck

"When I first arrived the first few weeks were taken up with building and lab inductions where you learn about health and safety in the labs and basic laboratory skills."

Hello I'm Joanne Beck and I'm a 20 year old scientific apprentice from Newton-In-Furness. I started my apprenticeship in 2008 and have been working for National Nuclear Laboratories (NNL) based on the Sellafield site since I started.

I applied to become a GEN II apprentice whilst I was in my final year of sixth form. As I was studying chemistry, biology and maths the scientific apprenticeship seemed the best scheme for me. I thought that an apprenticeship would give me a good route to higher education but without the debt, and with an apprenticeship you get paid whilst you are learning.

Explain the process of applying

I found out about GEN II though my maths tutor at sixth form. I got an application form through my local careers office and was then invited for an aptitude test. I was sent a letter to say that I had passed my aptitude test and was invited to two interviews, one at the Connexions office and the other one with my employer, NNL. With the scientific scheme you work with your employer from day one so you sit two interviews.

To prepare for the interviews I went to my Connexions office and got a 'help pack'. I also prepared a lot of my own questions and answers to things they may ask like why I wanted to do the scientific apprenticeship.

What did you think when you first arrived?

I thought the Sellafield site was huge! I drove to site on my first day and my supervisor came to collect me from the pass office. The building I work in is a research and development centre.

What did you do during your first few months?

When I first arrived the first few weeks were taken up with building and lab inductions where you learn about health and safety in the labs and basic laboratory skills.When I first started at NNL I was seconded to a project to carry out basic lab work, which I have done for almost two years. During a typical day I would prepare samples, prepare

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Scientific

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lab equipment, take samples from batch tests and analyse samples. Analysis of samples can be done by using the ICP-AES (Inductibely Coupled Plasma- Atomic Emission Spectroscopy). The ICP - AES measures the amount of magnesium in the sample that we have taken (from a magnesium hydroxide and water sample). The samples are taken over a month period and using the data given from the ICP - AES I can work out the change of concentration of the sample over a period of time. When I carry out tests I record the data in a lab book, which are then given to my supervisor. Analysis can be carried out on the data collected, one of the analysis techniques I would use on the data is "standard deviation" of the data.

Do you go to college?

Yes. I am in my second year of college doing a HNC in applied chemistry and go to college one day per week. Most of the work is theory based with a one hour practical lesson during the day.

What is the best bit about doing a GEN II scientific apprenticeship?

Basically you go on to Higher Education but without the debt you may get from going to University. I am hoping that when I finish my apprenticeship my company, NNL, will sponsor me to go to University to do a degree in chemistry.

What has been your biggest achievement since starting your apprenticeship?

I was named as the GEN II Scientific Apprentice of the year in 2009 and have recently won the NNL Apprentice of the Year award.

Has there been any surprises during your Apprenticeship?

Yes, I was surprised how much apprentices are allowed to do. I thought it would be basic work but I have a lot of work and responsibility, which I enjoy.

What advice would you give someone who is thinking of applying?

They should definitely do an apprenticeship as it's a good alternative to university. I think that the scientific scheme is very interesting and I'd definitely recommend it if you enjoy sciences, problem solving and research.

GEN II

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