



Science and Engineering Apprenticeships

If you want an interesting career in science you have to stay at school, do A-levels and go to university, right? Wrong. With an apprenticeship scheme you can start your career at 16, keep learning and getting qualifications – and get paid for it too. And the likelihood is that you will get a permanent job at the end of the apprenticeship. Many different companies up and down the country offer apprenticeships as an entry to a wide range of interesting careers in the sciences. These positions are usually provided in conjunction with a 'learning provider', usually a local college.

On the opposite page, one young apprentice describes his experiences.

There are a number of ways to find out more about apprenticeships in your area. A good place to start is the apprenticeship website (see the Further Information box.) If you know of a company in your area which offers apprenticeships then you can also contact them direct.

A place on an apprenticeship is not guaranteed and there are a limited number available each year.

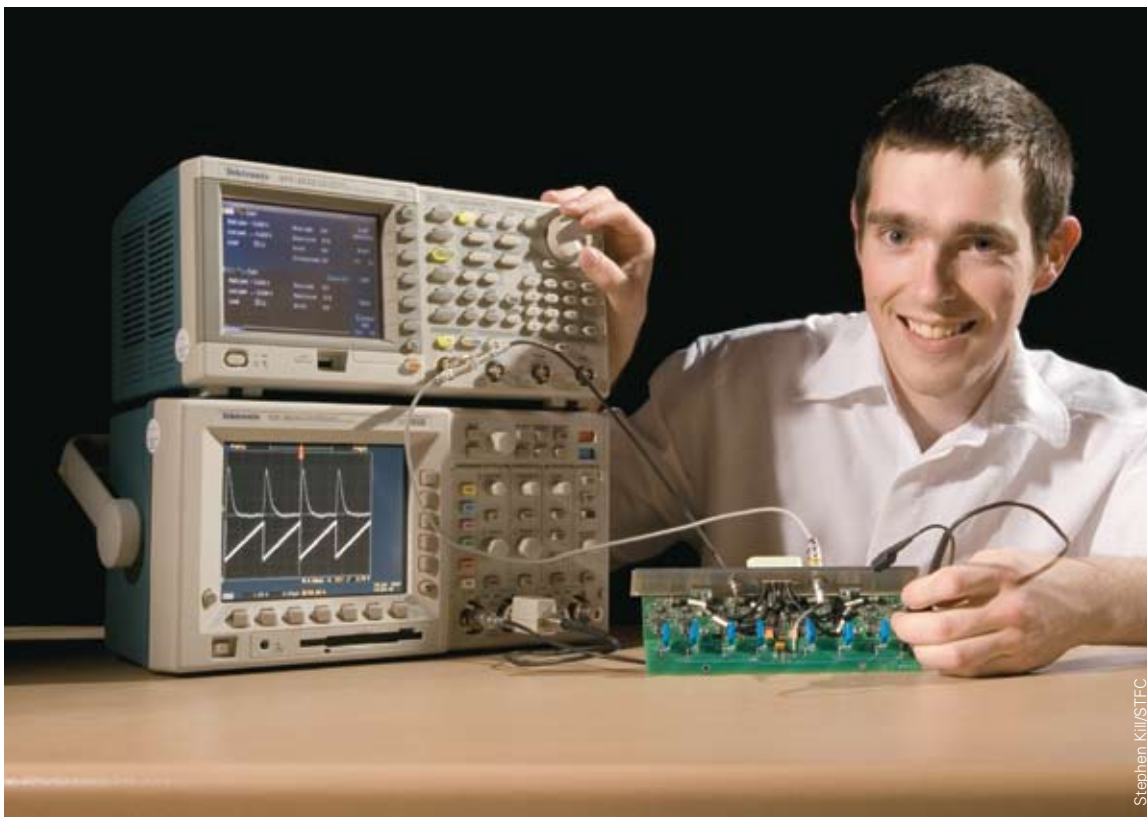
You will need to apply as you would for a job, fill in forms and have an interview. You may need to do this with both the learning provider (usually a college) and also the employer. It is important to make a good impression and convince the employer that you are interested in a career with them and prepared to work hard. You will have to sign up for between two and five years, so both you and the employer need to be convinced that you are the right person for them.

Further Information

The apprenticeship website **www.apprenticeships.org.uk** is a good place to start. This has more details about being an apprentice and can put you in touch with apprenticeships in your area.

The details of the apprenticeship that Simon is on are available on **www.apprentices.cclrc.ac.uk**

The BT website has some good general information about being an apprentice as well as details of how to apply for their scheme **www.bt.com/apprentice**



Stephen Kill/STFC

Left:
Simon Moorby,
apprentice
electrical engineer

Simon Moorby is an electrical engineer working as a technician at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire. He helps to build and maintain equipment which is used for a wide range of science research. Here he describes his career so far:

I wanted to work in a science career but I didn't want to stay at school after GCSEs. I liked the idea that with an apprenticeship you could earn while you carried on learning and that you would have the chance to get work experience too. I needed at least 5 GCSEs grade A*-C and this had to include Maths, English and Science. The first year was spent at college learning mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering as well as academic subjects leading towards an ONC (Ordinary National Certificate) in electrical and electronic engineering. Although I was at college full time I was still getting paid.

For the next 3 years I spent one day a week in college and the rest of the time I worked. I did placements in different workshops to gain a wide range of experience. The last 6 months of the apprenticeship was in the workshop where I now work so that the transition from being an apprentice to working was gradual. By the final year of the apprenticeship I was earning £310 per week.

Now I am employed by the company where I did the apprenticeship, but I am still paid to carry on learning. I am working towards my HNC (Higher National Certificate) in Electronic engineering and am hoping to to an HND (Higher National Diploma) and then a degree after that. The cost of my courses is paid and I still have one day a week in college.

I now work in data acquisition electronics. I design, build, test and commission circuitry. There is new technology available all the time so I have to keep up-to-date and keep on learning, but I enjoy the challenge.

If anyone was thinking about doing an apprenticeship they should be aware that it is not an easy option – it is hard work but it is well worth it.

Vicky Wong teaches and writes about chemistry. She is an editor of CATALYST.

Below and opposite:
Apprentices
at work in the
government labs.



Stephen Kill/STFC