2024-01-24 New Apprentices

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**SPEAKERS**

Wiktor Kaczmarek, Janet Marshall, Cameron Davis, Maria Levet, Tom Skears

**Maria Levet** 00:06

Hello and welcome to the Grenville Turner suite here at Cranfield University. My name is Maria Levet, and I'm the Talent and Development Co-ordinator here. Today we're here to talk about our apprenticeship employment opportunities, and what it is like to be an apprentice working at Cranfield University. As a large education provider, we employ a range of apprentices to support our talent pipelines and give them a great start for a lifelong learning journey. We understand that apprenticeships can feel a little bit complicated sometimes, especially understanding the different levels of apprenticeships or simply knowing what apprenticeship opportunities are available. To help you we have selected a number of popular questions to ask Janet Marshall our Apprenticeship Employer Lead, and some of our current apprentices. I'm joined on the sofa today by Janet. Hello, Janet.

**Janet Marshall** 01:06

Morning, Maria. How are you? Good. Thank you.

**Maria Levet** 01:09

My first question to you. For a lot of people, the university is mostly recognised as a place of study not working. How long have Cranfield University had apprentices for? And how big is our apprenticeship community?

**Janet Marshall** 01:26

Well, at Cranfield we've had apprentices for at least 15 years. So quite a long time we've had apprentices working for us, and our apprenticeship community is growing and will continue to grow. We see this as our pipeline of talent into the organisation. So currently, we have over 20 apprentices that work in jobs here for us at Cranfield.

**Maria Levet** 01:49

Wow, that's a lot of apprentices. What type of job roles do they do?

**Janet Marshall** 01:53

We've got a variety really, so a lot of our apprentices are in engineering roles. So we've got some engineering technicians, we've also got science technicians in our laboratories. But we've also got apprentices in Business Administration and in our IT department, but we hope to see areas growing that we have apprentices in in the future. So it's not a limitless number.

**Maria Levet** 02:18

Well, apprenticeships are great because you can learn and work at the same time. But from what age can you apply for an apprenticeship?

**Janet Marshall** 02:26

You can apply for an apprenticeship from 16 years old, but there is no upper age limit. So it's important just to think about when you're doing your GCSEs whether that's going to be the next move for you. So you can apply for apprenticeships before you've even taken your GCSEs. So in that last year of GCSE, you can take them with your predicted grades and apply using predicted grades. And it's important though, to think about that you need Maths and English really, in order to apply for an apprenticeship. Because that is the funding requirements by the government. So it's important that you work really hard on those two studies.

03:04

Okay. And if you don't have a pass in Maths and English, can you still apply?

03:09

Yeah, if unfortunately, you don't get that pass that grade four or above, then yes, you can still apply it won't discriminate you at all, it won't stop you applying. All it will mean is that you will have to work a little bit harder during your apprenticeship because you'll have to do an extra qualification which is called functional skills with your training provider alongside so you'll be doing your apprenticeship qualification and a functional skills qualification at the same time. But for anybody that hasn't passed their Maths and English, they're a really good skill for the future, so that functional skills will help fill that gap.

03:41

I see that makes sense. Yes. What is the average pay for an apprentice in the UK or even better at Cranfield University?

03:49

Well, there is a national minimum wage for apprenticeships, and they change every year. So we at Cranfield are a real living wage employer. So therefore our apprentices start on the real living wage, which is at the moment at about 22,000 pounds. So we pay quite a lot more than the national minimum wage.

**Maria Levet** 04:10

Very nice. Are there any additional factors to keep in mind when applying for an apprenticeship?

04:16

I think what people need to understand when they're applying for an apprenticeship is that it is a real job. So you are in a real workplace. And when you come to work at Cranfield, you're in a higher education establishment with lots of people, lots of facilities, quite a large organisation so you have a real job. But it also means you get your own responsibilities and tasks. You have a mentor and a line manager that can help and support you. But you do need to think about 'have I got the commitment and the tenacity to work and learn at the same time?'. It is quite a commitment to take on but it's a really good reward for your patience, the time that you spend, and it's a really good opportunity to develop your career and take those first stepping stones to your career going forward in the future.

05:05

That sounds like a great opportunity. Thank you, Janet, this is my final question to you. How do I find apprenticeship opportunities and when is the best time to apply for them?

05:15

Best place to find our apprenticeship opportunities are on this web page that you're on today. We will put our apprenticeship vacancies on that webpage when they're available. Our apprenticeship programme is business-led. So we might have vacancies at all different times of the year. And there may be times when you look and there is no apprenticeship vacancies. But don't let that put you off is what I would say because you can set up an alert on our web page to alert you when we have a vacancy available. The other place to look for apprenticeship vacancies is findapprenticeships.gov.uk. We advertise on there as well, as well as lots of other employment opportunities, employers I should say, advertise their apprenticeship vacancies. But yeah, have a look at this webpage. It's got lots of information, lots of case studies, all what you need to know about what it's like to work at Cranfield as an apprentice.

06:08

Thank you, Janet. You've shared some very useful information with us today about apprenticeships. Now we would like to ask our apprentices some questions about their roles, and how they find combining work and studying during their programmes. Perhaps you would like to introduce yourself to start with. Cameron, I'll come to you first.

**Cameron Davis** 06:32

Hi, I'm Cameron Davis, and I'm in the third year of my level three engineering technician apprenticeship. And I'm currently working in the surface engineering and precision centre. Thank you.

06:43

Thank you, Cameron. Tom, tell me about yourself next.

**Tom Skears** 06:48

Hi, I'm Tom Skears, I've already completed a level two facilities operative apprenticeship here at Cranfield and I've just started my level three facilities supervisor apprenticeship, and I am in the facilities team.

07:02

Thank you, Tom. And, Wiktor, do you want to go next please.

**Wiktor Kaczmarek** 07:08

I'm Wiktor Kaczmarek, and I'm currently level three information communications technology apprenticeship on my first year and I'm with the IT department. Thank you.

07:19

Thank you very much. Wiktor, how about can you tell us about why did you choose an apprenticeship route?

**Wiktor Kaczmarek** 07:27

I've chosen the apprenticeship route because it's important for me to put my theory into practice as I then get a far deeper understanding than the theory alone. I think that being able to earn while you learn is also important, as it allows you to earn a qualification whilst being able to invest in yourself in the future. Thank you.

**Maria Levet** 07:46

Definitely, that sounds great. How about you, Cameron?

07:51

I chose an apprenticeship because I think the practical learning that you get on the job you can't get anywhere else. And I think the opportunity to work with very experienced professionals in the field, again, you just you won't get that anywhere else. Thank you.

08:07

Cameron, it's really interesting what you say there about practical experience. Have you got an example of something you can say about what you've learned in a practical way, since you've been doing your engineering technician apprenticeship?

08:20

I think my workshop and machining skills is something I didn't have anything of before I started my apprenticeship. And through the college units and through learning from people at the workplace, I've picked up all those skills that I need, and I now I use them every day in the workplace. Thank you.

**Janet Marshall** 08:39

Fantastic.

08:40

That sounds great. Cameron, did you choose your apprenticeship based on your favourite school subject? Or is it something totally different?

08:50

Yeah, I was always into my engineering through college. I studied engineering, maths and physics, before I did my apprenticeship. So I think certainly my choices at college did affect my choice and my apprenticeship. Thank you.

**Maria Levet** 09:06

That makes sense. How about you, Wiktor?

09:10

For me this was the case as well. A lot of subjects I liked at school, but I was always the most fascinated by computer science. And I've always done research in my own time, like things like new technologies being released. Thank you.

09:23

I think it's interesting to listen to Wiktor and Cameron there about their choices at school and how that fed into their apprenticeship. But don't let that put you off if you've taken subjects, and actually you've seen an apprenticeship that is more interesting to you. Don't let that put you off, please apply because you don't have to come into the apprenticeship with lots of knowledge or skills in that area. So you know, just see if there's something that takes your eye and apply for it.

09:52

That's very good advice there, Janet. Let me come to you, Tom, next. What is it typical day like for you at Cranfield University?

10:02

Well, a typical day for me would be getting in in the morning and doing a walk around of my areas that I help to look after. So here at Cranfield, we're split up into four zones. I look after three and four. So I'll do a morning walk around with my mentor, looking at all of our buildings and picking up any remedial issues, mostly lighting. And we will then come back to the office and raise any work requests that need doing for anything that we picked up. And then I will take any other issues throughout the day. And also I'll be attending various meetings like project meetings or compliance meetings. Thank you.

10:41

Tom, can I ask - for a lot of people that haven't been to Cranfield, they don't realise how big a place Cranfield is. You say you do walk arounds of your buildings? How long or your, how much of your day does that take up?

10:55

Yeah, so my morning walk around can take anywhere between an hour and an hour and a half, as we have many, many buildings that we've got to get through and a lot of them are very large. So it's getting around to each of the rooms in each of the areas to ensure that you've looked at them properly. And you've not just wandered through taking a quick look and wandered out again. So it's quite time consuming, but I also really enjoy it. Thank you.

11:20

Thanks, Tom. Cameron, can I ask you the same question? How is a typical day like for you at Cranfield?

11:30

Oh, I'm quite lucky that a typical day for me can really change. I could be doing anything from building new testing equipment for testing future engines and aircraft. Or I could be running testing programmes on rigs that we already have made or fixing them, which sometimes happens. So yeah, I'm really lucky in that respect that when I come in, sometimes a new challenge can pop up straight away. Thank you.

11:57

Very interesting. Okay. Wiktor, I understand you go to college once a week. How do you manage your work and learning at the same time.

12:08

I manage this by having dedicated time for my college work in my spare time. During the week and the weekend, if necessary, I can make sure on top of my college work regularly, which allows me to then focus on my work without worrying.

12:23

Wiktor, you say that you have some dedicated time for your college work. Do you get dedicated time within your working week at Cranfield as well to do your college work and study your college qualification?

12:37

Yes, that's correct. All I have to do is have a word with my line manager, and he'd be happy to to give me a dedicated amount of time to work on my off the job training. Thank you.

**Janet Marshall** 12:48

Thanks, Wiktor.

**Maria Levet** 12:50

How about you, Tom? Is this the same for you?

12:54

Yes, it is. So I also have dedicated time throughout my week to allow me to work on my college work. And I can also speak to my line manager and get more time. But for me, my college is delivered slightly differently to most people. So due to the nature of my apprenticeship, my apprenticeship is actually delivered to me online. So I attend regular Teams meetings with my tutor and other apprentices where we go through different modules of our apprenticeship. And we will do group activities throughout the day. And it is quite a lot at times, but it's really good fun. Thank you.

13:35

And Tom, can I ask with online activities, sometimes you're online for quite some time. How would you find that? How is that broken up? Because for some people that might feel a bit daunting sitting on a online computer or laptop for a significant amount of time. How does the provider break that up for you?

13:54

Yeah, it's really well broken up. And it's certainly not daunting, especially when you get in there and you get into the swing of things. So we have regular breaks, but we're also split up into group activities or looking at PowerPoints. And we get plenty of time. And we can always ask to say, 'oh, can I step out five minutes, I just need to take a quick break', and they're always happy to help you out and make sure that you're still enjoying yourself Thank you.

**Janet Marshall** 14:21

Great, thank you, Tom.

14:22

This is very interesting, the different approaches to learning here. This last question is to all of you. What piece of advice would you give somebody who's interested in applying for an apprenticeship? Cameron, can I come to you first?

14:39

The piece of advice I'd give is to not worry if you don't think you have the skills or experience you need for the job. Your employer is not going to expect you to have any experience if you do, it's a bonus of course. But all the skills that you need, you'll pick up on the job whether that be at college or in the workplace. Thank you.

14:58

Yeah, I think that's a really important point to note is that for an apprentice employment opportunity, we're not expecting you to come with oodles of knowledge and skills already. That's what our apprenticeship programmes are there to support you with and to teach you so that you can learn that for your future career. So just bear that in mind that you don't need to have all of what we're looking for in order to apply. Thank you, Cameron.

**Maria Levet** 15:22

Very good extra advice there. How about you, Tom, any advice for future applicants?

15:30

My advice would be to not worry about having to struggle with college work, there is no struggle. There's always people around to help you, especially here at Cranfield, also at your college. Just ask people, you know, you can say 'I'm struggling with this bit', and someone will happily help you through it and help you to understand where you've gone wrong, or what you need to do to improve it. Thank you.

15:55

Yes, absolutely. And, how about you, Wiktor? Any advice from you?

**Wiktor Kaczmarek** 16:02

I would say that it's very important to make sure that you are mentally ready for an apprenticeship. You have to be dedicated to your apprenticeship and your own development. In the long term, that investment of your time will stand out positively in your work. Thank you.

16:17

I think that's really good advice, Wiktor, actually, I think that is what people need to know - you have to be ready for working and learning, so thanks for sharing that.

16:28

Thank you to all three of you for taking time out of your workplace today. I hope this information was really useful to everyone. Let me come back to Janet, anything else to add?

**Janet Marshall** 16:41

I think all I want to add is that, you know, apprenticeships are a great opportunity to start your careers early. You get real world experience, you get a recognised qualification, and you get a monetary reward for all your hard work. I think I'd also like to add that at Cranfield we take our apprentices on a permanent basis. So that shows how much we value and embrace apprentices as our talent for the future. The only other thing I wanted to mention was around degree apprenticeships, we get a lot of questions about degree level apprenticeships, we do employ degree level apprenticeships, apprentices but it is important that people applying do have an A level in the subject that they're applying for, because for a degree there is entry criteria that they would need to meet. So it's just thinking in terms of your career pathway. If you're at GCSE level and you want to do a degree apprenticeship then you will need to do some A levels before that stage. Thank you.

**Maria Levet** 17:40

Okay, thank you, Janet. I hope you found this information useful and are excited about the possibility of applying for an apprenticeship here at Cranfield University. Please keep an eye out on our website. And we hope to see you soon when you apply for an opportunity and we'll show you on the campus. Thank you very much. Thank you, Janet.

**Janet Marshall** 18:07

Thank you. Goodbye. Goodbye.