

## Case Study: *Success story demonstrates how apprenticeship programmes can be used to up-skill existing workforce.*

Sherace Francis is a Higher Apprentice studying Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist Level 7 whilst working as a Process Analytical Technology Engineer for GSK. In this case study, Sherace shares her insight on what it's really like to work as an apprentice for a leading global healthcare company.

### What is your role at GSK and what prompted you to consider an apprenticeship?

I am a Process Analytical Technology Engineer. In my current role, I do a lot of data analytics. However, my background is in Chemical Engineering and I have both my undergraduate and masters degrees in this subject. A year into my current role, I saw that there was an opportunity to upskill and become more competent at my job. I met a colleague who was taking part in an apprenticeship in Data Science within my company. My manager and I knew this would be a great opportunity for me to develop my skillset and to help me get where I wanted to be career-wise. Apprenticeships are encouraged at GSK, so I was lucky to be able to apply almost instantly after conversations with my manager and departmental director.



*Sherace Francis  
Process Analytical Technology Engineer at GSK and Higher  
Apprentice studying level 7 Digital and Technology Solutions*

### Tell us a bit about your apprenticeship and why it appealed to you?

I am studying the MSc Digital and Technology Solutions Level 7 course at Queen Mary's University of London. The course sparked my interest because there was a large emphasis on 'on-the-job' learning. I had been specialising in multivariate modelling over the past year within my role but wanted to strengthen my ability to innovate by increasing the breadth of my data science knowledge. I do a lot of troubleshooting in my job so as I broadened my skillset throughout my degree- I was able to provide a greater amount of support to my manufacturing site. Not only does it benefit my colleagues and our company, but it helps me get to where I want within my career.



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### How important is self-development to you?

I have a passion for learning, and I always want to be adding to my knowledge base. If I am not stimulated in a learning environment, then I am simply not satisfied! It is important for me to grow within the industry I am a part of. I knew that I could not miss the opportunity to develop my skills and knowledge further using this apprenticeship.

### How have you adapted to the programme?

I finished my Chemical Engineering masters in 2017 and I started my Data apprenticeship in January 2020. I did not feel I had to do a lot of readjustment to get back into the university study-mindset again. I felt fresh and prepared to start my new studies and I felt very happy to have the opportunity to start learning once more.

### How have you had to adjust to the role of an apprentice?

I am lucky to have great management behind me. I am able to separate my time in work away from the time I have for my apprenticeship. I dedicate an entire day a week solely to my apprenticeship which I discussed with my manager from the outset. This way I am not derailed by my other work commitments or anything else that occurs within my role as an engineer. The time split has allowed me to do well in my course, and to get the correct balance between work and studies. I was able to easily adjust to my new workload without any issues.

GSK really push for development opportunities for their workforce. This is brilliant for retention rates and investing in individuals who have the potential to progress further if given the opportunity and resources to do so.

### How is it impacting you at work?

I feel a lot more knowledgeable and popular within my team as I can do a lot of things which others cannot. I am in a unique position and feel more valuable to my company because of the new skills developed through my apprenticeship studies. Upskilling has helped me progress further, including being rewarded with pay rises and promotions. I feel very secure at my place of work. Knowing the value of my skillset is satisfying and I have my apprenticeship to thank for this in the long term.

### What would you say to people who are tempted to undertake a development opportunity through an apprenticeship?

They should think first about their next steps and what it is they truly want to do with their future! Identify where you want to be and then identify how your company can help you get there. How does an apprenticeship fit with your long-term plan and does the course fit well with your strengths and aspirations? Will it help you get where you want to be? There are so many options and courses out there. I would suggest putting yourself out there, being assertive and asking your management team for guidance and support going forward.

Apprenticeships can be wrongly labelled as an anchor, but government led apprenticeships are flexible and allow you to be who you want to be within a company and where you want to be further along the line. A little-known fact is that you can actually change roles, and even companies and still stay on your apprenticeship as long as your university and management team agree to allow you to continue the course. I would recommend apprenticeships to anyone who wants to add to their skills, it is never too late to progress within your career.

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