

Case Study: Emma Sellars, Communications Officer at Cogent Skills



Emma Sellars, 24, is the Communications Officer at Cogent Skills and is currently doing the Level 4 PR & Communications assistant apprenticeship with Cambridge Marketing College

Cogent skills
for science industries

Why did you choose this particular apprenticeship?

Having originally completed an undergraduate degree in Drama and English, I wanted to expand my skillset. After browsing through various options with my line manager, we decided we wanted to target a new area for both our marketing team and myself. The PR element of the course is particularly new, and I hope that as I progress I can share my newfound knowledge with my colleagues.

How have you found the whole experience, so far?

My apprenticeship experience has been a very positive one so far. I have enjoyed starting to study and learn more about my profession as a whole. Before I started working at Cogent Skills, I had no idea that apprenticeships weren't just for school leavers. I was delighted to be given the chance to learn again after leaving university. I usually take one study day a week, where I listen to lectures and study as well as participating in group discussions. My tutor Alan is a PR professional and has been so helpful and knowledgeable.

What has been the hardest part of your apprenticeship?

I would definitely have to say getting used to studying again! Having been working since I finished university in 2019/20 it had been a couple of years since I had last sat down with a text book. However, being able to dedicate a day to study has meant I have easily adjusted to my apprenticeship and it is now part of my working week.

What has been the best part?

The best part is being able to reflect on my work in my studies and vice versa. The nature of the course encourages me to reflect on examples in my day job. This has led me to change my approaches in certain situations and help me grow in confidence in certain tasks.

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I personally learn best when putting my learning in to practice and I have certainly seen myself come on leaps and bounds from doing so. Apprenticeships give you the flexibility to learn at any level of your career, you are never too young or too old to upskill!”

How are you hoping an apprenticeship will support your career progression?

I am hoping my apprenticeship will add to my skillset in terms of validating my expertise. Although I already have a university level degree, I think this apprenticeship is more vocational and will help me understand the kind of roles within communications and PR that I am more suited to. Furthermore, the apprenticeship has really helped me to be more ambitious about my options for the future.

What impact has your degree apprenticeship had in your organisation?

I think since I started my apprenticeship I have become a lot more independent and my confidence has grown in the workplace as a whole. I have been able to share information and handbooks with my colleagues in areas we are not as focussed on such as ‘crisis communications’.

Would you recommend an apprenticeship?

I would definitely recommend an apprenticeship to anyone looking to do one. Being able to complete a qualification which is integrated in to my working life is a great flexible way to study without the expenses of university degrees. The practical element of an apprenticeship blends really well with my studies. I personally learn best when putting my learning in to practice and I have certainly seen myself come on leaps and bounds from doing so. Apprenticeships give you the flexibility to learn at any level of your career, you are never too young or too old to upskill!

Do you have any advice for future apprentices?

My advice to future apprentices is to choose an area you can see yourself pursuing a job in. If you enjoy your studies and are interested in the subject, I find it helps to keep you motivated. I would also say that time management is key and to make sure you block out time to study away from work emails. Also be sure to keep your line manager in the loop with your apprenticeship, and discuss any areas with them. Speaking to people about what I have learnt has been vital for my understanding so far!