

Joe Richardson

I was brought up around Stratford-Upon-Avon in Warwickshire, but, with my family originally from the North East, I couldn't resist getting to spend four years studying an MEng in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Newcastle University. It was an amazing place to study, I loved being in a city campus where you could nip into the city for lunch but jump on the metro (Newcastle's London underground) and get to the beach. I graduated with a First Class degree in 2017.

Aside from all the great industrial experience you get through the E3 Academy scheme, it also provides



a great opportunity to make many new friends and contacts. It allows you to meet people not only in your own year, but also in other years and even at other universities. These connections were very helpful as, from the E3 interview process onwards, you already had a better idea of what to expect and also different people to turn to for support on difficult assignments or general student advice. These inter-year and inter-university connections were made even stronger through summer placements at your sponsoring company and even more so at the annual summer school which was always a highlight of the summer. For the summer school you'd often end up in a totally new city, getting to learn from organised events and then

play the evenings away. You're then able to take all these developed relationships and industrial knowledge back to university and really apply it.

I was extremely fortunate to experience a very varied graduate scheme during my first two years at Control Techniques after finishing in Newcastle. I started in R&D, working on some customer focused PC tools and then wrote the embedded firmware for a new encoder module. Throughout this I had amazing support from my manager, other colleagues and even specialist external training. This really allowed me to take what I had learnt at university on so much further. I then completed a secondment in technical support, where I dealt with escalated customer issues from our offices around the world, including helping some of our biggest customers. I also supported training and marketing of our products.

My final graduate rotation was in our UK application centre where I got to see first-hand how our customers use our products. I led on-site training courses, commissioned drives, wrote PLC applications for large customers in a variety of industries and even supported the sales team with technical support and customer pitches. Some of my colleagues on the graduate scheme were able to do a shorter secondment overseas, such as Germany and Italy at our offices there.

Overall, my graduate scheme was extremely positive, as whilst improving on my technical skills throughout, it really enabled me to see things from our customers' point of view, as it is very easy to become blinkered in R&D and forget it is the end-user you are designing for. In addition, the variety of roles and responsibility I have already been exposed to, will be a great help towards receiving chartership in the coming years.