

NATIONAL CAREERS WEEK 2024

# Shape Your Career



Work Experience, Self Employment,  
Apprenticeships, Gap Years, Courses



# Apprenticeships

I am looking at my careers options and am considering doing an **APPRENTICESHIP** but am unsure what this is?

An apprenticeship is a paid job where the employee learns and gains valuable experiences. Alongside on-the-job training, apprentices spend at least 20 percent of their working hours completing classroom-based learning with a college, university or training provider which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.



**Natalia Brozek - Level 6 Solicitor  
Apprenticeship at DLA Piper UK LLP**

**“The solicitor apprenticeship is a transformative route leading me to gain industry-recognised qualifications and hands on, practical experience from day one. The apprenticeship has aided my success by enabling individuals like me to have an accessible and inclusive pathway into a professional career. My own journey has given me the ability to build meaningful connections with industry professionals, and nurture invaluable technical and employment skills!”**

**Discover how Yusuf shaped his career through an Apprenticeship**

**Watch the video**

# Employers who offer Apprenticeships



# How My Apprenticeship Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador Lauren Dennis, Data Analyst Apprentice

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I have been an advocate of apprenticeship programmes since I was in sixth form which was over 6 years ago now and I see the greatness they do for students like myself.

A student who comes from a disadvantaged background, and has an illness, which felt like a barrier when it came to going down the traditional route of going to university and securing my dream role. But through an apprenticeship programme, I was proudly able to do that whilst bringing my whole self to the table. Being able to learn on the job whilst being surrounded by many different talented individuals in my company is one of the things I enjoy about my apprenticeship. I am an individual that enjoys networking as I am aware of all the benefits that come with building a solid network.

# How My Apprenticeship Shaped my Career –

Written by our ambassador **Lauren Dennis, Data Analyst Apprentice**

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An apprenticeship gives you many opportunities and teaches you a variety of ways to develop. For example, I met someone through my apprenticeship who gave me the chance to feature in a podcast where I was allowed to touch on disabilities and raise awareness for my illness sickle cell. I also became an author and wrote a chapter in a book filled with many other student stories.

My life has more meaning than it did a few years ago and that's all thanks to my role, I have a purpose and objectives I want to achieve that I wouldn't have thought of without my education programme. I have a platform from my apprenticeship which I plan to use to continue to work on my brand. Not going to university has been the silver lining in my life that I needed. I could go on about all the amazing ways an apprenticeship gave me a new way of thinking and carved a new path for me to hit all my career goals as there are so many.

More people need to hear of all the ways an apprenticeship can benefit them and I am focused on being the one to spread the word!

# How My Apprenticeship Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador Adam Seabrook, Digital Business Accelerator Apprentice

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My name's Adam, and I'm an Apprentice Product Marketer at Google. I never gave much thought to apprenticeships when I was making decisions after college. I was originally planning to study international business at university. But now, I'm 100 per cent sure I made the right choice with an apprenticeship.

[Follow Adam  
on LinkedIn](#)

With this apprenticeship, it has shaped my career in many ways. I am getting hands-on experience in one of the most fast-paced, constantly changing industries. Keeping up with and marketing the latest: innovations in AI, products, and feature drops in the technology industry. All of this has helped me develop valuable product marketing skills I wouldn't have gotten from university and are only achievable with work experience.

I've been fortunate to have been able to travel to America for work. Meeting lots of Google marketers from different markets from across the world.

# How My Apprenticeship Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador Adam Seabrook, Digital Business Accelerator Apprentice

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All these people were at different points in their careers and they were able to give me tips, advice, and guidance on the direction I should take to further improve my career, this is common within Google as everyone is willing to talk to you and help you improve. In addition to this my team coaches me and allows me to shadow their meetings with agencies and partners to help me learn professional communication skills and know what it is like working with these external stakeholders.

At Google, you are able to explore many different career pathways. This is done in various ways from free educational courses, helping to build a range of skills and knowledge of different careers to the ability of job shadowing outside your team to see what it's like in a different position. This allows me to explore other passions outside product marketing and see if marketing is the right choice for me. It can also allow me to diversify my skill set and network.

All of this is enabling my future career in ways I wouldn't have dreamt of if I went to university and that is why I'm 100 per cent sure I made the right choice with an apprenticeship.

# Courses

I am looking at my careers options and am considering a **COURSE** but am unsure what this is?

A course is a programme offered by a company / organisation in a particular field for a set period of time. Some courses are free, but others may need to be paid for. They usually last for around 8 - 12 weeks and are carried out virtually or in-person; they are used as a gateway to get you into your desired career.



**Olivia Smith - Accounting  
Apprentice at HSA & Co**

**“Courses have shaped my career path because they really help you figure out what that career can be about. It’s like a mini insight whilst gaining something you can tell employers about in interviews / can add to your CV. I have done some cyber security and coding courses. These can be found on online and directly on employers websites!”**

**Discover how Harry and Iyanu shaped their careers through a Course**

**Watch the video**



**Yusuf Mumtaz – Level 6 Digital & Technology  
Solutions Apprentice at Jaguar Land Rover**

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**“Embarking on the Scrum Master course has taught me how to remain resilient, a vital trait for any professional. I’ve learnt how to deliver work with best practice, maintaining organisation, and honing the ability to present to diverse audiences. It not only helped alleviate but also eradicate my imposter syndrome in the workplace!”**

# Employers who offer Courses



shaw trust



Learning

# How My Course Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador Amelia Pilkington, Technology Degree Apprentice

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Before discussing the course that significantly influenced my career, it's important to acknowledge the course that started it all – my computer science GCSEs, taught by Mrs. Ali, who was a constant source of inspiration. Without her teaching, I might not have pursued computer science further. The way she taught made learning enjoyable, to the extent that I didn't need pen and paper for any of her lessons. After completing my GCSEs in computer science, I continued with the subject for my A-levels, with the aspiration of becoming a software engineer.

[Follow Amelia on LinkedIn](#)

During my first year of A-levels, both of my teachers suggested I take advantage of my free holiday days and invest them in enhancing my practical knowledge. They specifically recommended the Girls Who Code (GWC) Summer Immersion program. I applied and was fortunate enough to be accepted, immersing myself in a learning environment where I acquired web development languages alongside peers from various countries worldwide.

## How My **Course** Shaped my Career -

Written by our ambassador **Amelia Pilkington**, Technology Degree Apprentice

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In addition to programming skills, the program taught me valuable lessons in socializing and teamwork. Although I enjoyed the problem-solving aspect of programming, I began to realize that the software development path wasn't the right fit for me. Despite this, the experience was invaluable as it helped me discover my strengths and preferences.

However, in addition to the program and, through my technology degree apprenticeship, which exposed me to various roles, I found a great interest in Technology Solution Architecture. Other courses such as Morgan Stanley: Step In, Step Up Tech Program, and work experience on Forage, further influenced this transformative journey. After my rewarding three-month experience with the Accenture Microsoft Business Group Solution Architect team, followed by a year in Tech Sales, I am confident that this is the path I am determined to pursue.

# Gap Year

I am looking at my careers options and am considering carrying out a **GAP YEAR** but am unsure what this is?

A Gap Year involves taking a year away from education and permanent work. People typically go travelling, volunteer, get work experience etc. It is a great way to develop yourself and your skills before taking the next step in your career. The most important thing is to ensure you have a plan in place for after the year is up.



Rhea Joshipura - Gap Year Student

“During my gap year, I gained post-graduation experiences through part-time employment, refining interpersonal abilities and job application proficiency. I prioritised networking and balanced work with leisure, incorporating sports and socialisation. This strategy laid a robust foundation for professional advancement, supported by ongoing efforts to enhance my skillset / mindset”



Discover how Joana and Abel shaped their careers by taking a Gap Year

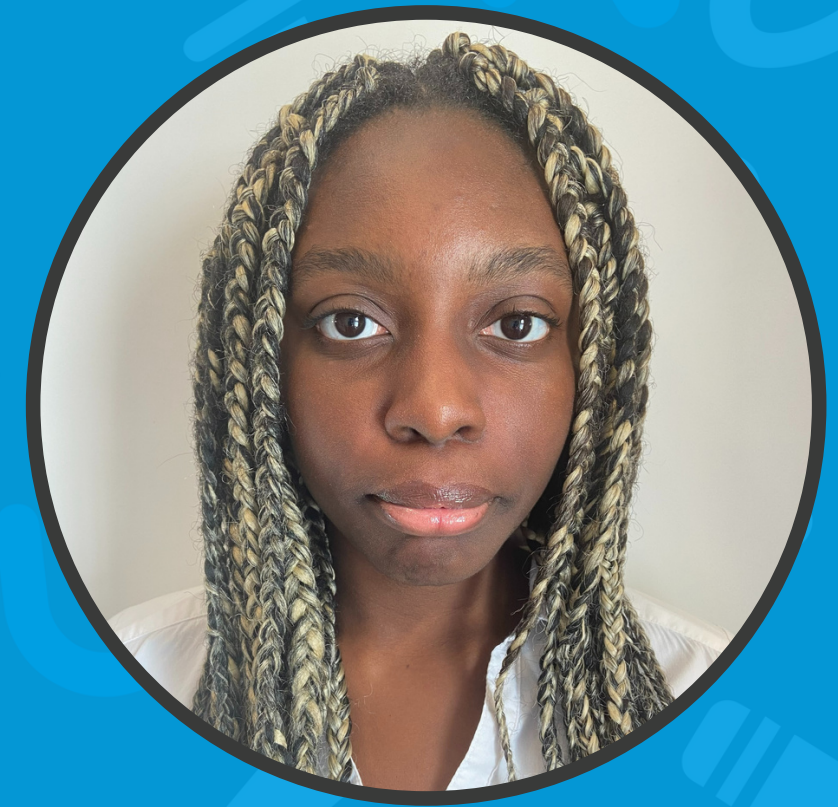
[Watch the video](#)

# Organisations who offer Gap Years



# How My Gap Year Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador **Iyanu Adisa, Financial Services Apprentice**

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A year out of school, I embarked on a journey as a degree apprentice for NatWest. My gap year allowed me to develop skills to be a strong candidate when applying for apprenticeships, helping to shape my career journey.

University was the path that was pushed by my sixth form and family.

Although I wasn't quite sold on the idea, I went ahead and applied and was set to study Geography with Business at Nottingham. Had I not missed my offer on results day I couldn't say that I would be where I am right now. I was set on that specific course and unwilling to consider the alternatives I decided to take a gap year, a decision I had sworn off for the past 2 years because I knew that if I didn't go to university straight after A-Levels I would never go. 17 year-old me was right.

I saw this as my opportunity to pursue what I was too afraid to go for. I tirelessly spent the next 9 months researching various industries, building professional skills and working on applications to build the life that I truly wanted for myself.

**[Follow Iyanu on LinkedIn](#)**

# How My Gap Year Shaped my Career –

Written by our ambassador **Iyanu Adisa**, Financial Services Apprentice

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The hard work paid off. Some afternoon in early May. I got a call from my now manager that she would like to offer me the role I have today. Upon successful completion of my apprenticeship, I will leave with a degree in financial services, experience working in a bank and access to a vast network. I'd like to say I will be getting the best of both worlds, minus the student debt.

Although I didn't have the typical gap year volunteering at a turtle sanctuary in Costa Rica, interrrailing in Europe or teaching children English in Tanzania, I wouldn't change a thing. A gap year is what you choose to do with it. I chose to use mine to set myself up for success in my career.

The moral of the story is that there is no harm in taking a year to discover where you would like to take your career. Completing work experience, that isn't the typical one-week off school they allow you, will truly give you insight into where you would like to take your career. Plus, in my case, the leadership, teamwork and dedication to learning that I developed in my role as a Supervisor during my gap year was extremely valuable as they are skills that I now transfer to my current role.

# Work Experience

I am looking at my careers options and am considering carrying out **WORK EXPERIENCE** but am unsure what this is?

**Work experience is any time spent in a work environment, in any sector, learning new skills on the job and gaining first-hand, real-world experience. Remember, work experience isn't just for students or young people but can be beneficial for people of all ages and backgrounds. You're never too 'old' to keep learning!**



**Rylie Sweeney - Apprentice Site  
Manager at Willmott Dixon**

**“Each program exposed me to new roles and provided invaluable insights into various industries. Through hands-on learning and immersive work experience I developed crucial skills and fuelled my enthusiasm. I recognised the impact of work experience on my education and knew that apprenticeships would be invaluable for my learning.”**

**Discover how Hadia and Lauryn shaped their careers by doing Work Experience**

**[Watch the video](#)**

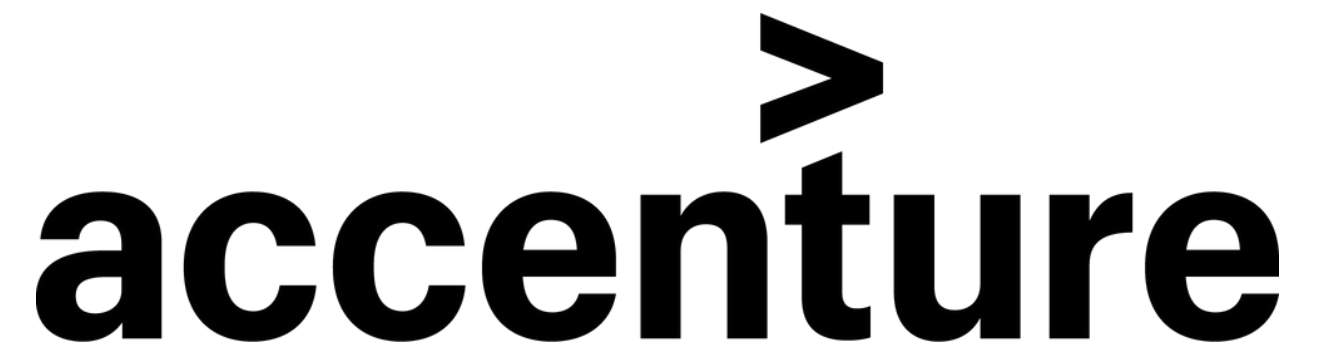


**Amelia Pilkington - Technology Degree  
Apprentice at Accenture**

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**“It has provided me with the opportunity to connect with others from diverse backgrounds, deepening my understanding of various technology areas. This exploration has aided my choice between software development and tech solution architecture as potential career paths, while also helping me identify and improve upon my strengths and weaknesses in various skill areas.”**

# Employers who offer Work Experience



# How My Work Experience Shaped my Career – Written by our ambassador Zaid Kotwal, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice

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We all know how competitive today's job market is, so experience often stands out as the biggest difference between landing your dream job or merely wishing for it. As a Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice, I've come to understand just how important gaining work experience is. It's not just about bulking up your CV; it's about the invaluable lessons learned, skills honed, and networks built that can shape your career trajectory for the better.

[Follow Zaid on LinkedIn](#)

Just as a disclaimer, it doesn't matter what field you want to pursue, my examples show that no matter what experience you get, it'll make a difference. Also, until about 2 months before I started my apprenticeship, I was adamant I would be going into aerospace engineering. However, with both offers in front of me, I chose the civil route. This itself shows specific experiences aren't necessary, although it is encouraged.

Before even beginning my apprenticeship, I realised early on that classroom learning, while fundamental, only scratches the surface of what it takes to excel in the real world. Theory provides the foundation, but it's through practical application that knowledge truly blossoms.

# How My Work Experience Shaped my Career -

Written by our ambassador **Zaid Kotwal**, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice

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Work experience bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering insights into the day-to-day realities of the profession. Along with this, certain soft skills can only be achieved through specific experiences. How many of us can say we've got customer-facing skills (and not just write it down on application forms)?

One of the most significant advantages of work experience is the opportunity to witness firsthand how theoretical concepts translate into real-world projects. I spent a week during the summer holidays of my college years at Siemens, which is a huge engineering company. The focus of that week was to show us how companies worked from the top to the bottom, the processes, and systems in place and even the business aspect. Although the week consisted of mainly manufacturing management within engineering (something completely different to what I wanted to do), it provided a lot of insight into what I could expect once I start working.

# How My Work Experience Shaped my Engineering Career –

## Written by our ambassador Zaid Kotwal, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice

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Work experience exposes you to diverse challenges and problem-solving scenarios, fostering adaptability and critical thinking skills. It might be a little surprising but my best example for this would be the few months I spent volunteering at a local optician's clinic. Just one day a week over 4 months where I worked alongside the receptionists dealing with customers, some database management, and the pre-screening process of the eye appointment. This itself taught me communication, organisation and various other skills. I would then spend time with the optician himself, seeing how appointments are carried out, and how interaction with customers can differ between age, gender and language.

I've also got a Level 1 FA Coaching Qualification, meaning I can coach the younger generation in football (and probably get them to play better than Man United!). This involved the professional training as well as volunteering as a coach for a year.

# **How My Work Experience Shaped my Engineering Career –**

## **Written by our ambassador Zaid Kotwal, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice**

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Another invaluable aspect of work experience is the opportunity to connect with professionals and mentors. These relationships extend beyond the duration of a placement, serving as a source of guidance and support throughout your career journey.

In today's competitive job market, work experience is no longer just a bonus, it's a prerequisite for success. As a Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice, I've witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of work experience on my career trajectory. It has provided me with the skills, insights, and connections necessary to thrive in the ever-evolving field of civil engineering. To aspiring professionals embarking on their career journeys, I offer this advice: embrace every opportunity to gain practical experience, seize mentorship opportunities, and cultivate a network of industry professionals. By doing so, you'll not only enhance your employability but also lay the groundwork for a fulfilling and successful career.

# Self-Employment

I am looking at my careers options and am considering going **SELF EMPLOYED** but am unsure what this is?

Being self-employed means you legally run your own business and take responsibility for its success or failure. Self-employed workers are not paid through PAYE, and they do not have the rights and responsibilities of an employee.



**Harry Phypers - Host and Producer of  
The Ignition Podcast**

**“Being self-  
employed is  
like having a  
map but your  
destination  
on that map  
keeps  
moving”**

**Discover how being self  
employed has helped to  
shape Grace's career**

**[Watch the video](#)**

# How being self employed has helped to shape my career – Written by our ambassador **Grace Hardy, Accountant**

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Like many young people, I knew I wanted to start a business when I grew up. But I wasn't sure how to get there without continuing higher education. My severe dyslexia meant I never wanted to study business at university, where I knew I would struggle to write essays, a dissertation, and take notes in lectures.

I did a lot of research into apprenticeships and discovered so many benefits. They would provide a paid full-time job, pay for my qualification and I would enjoy all the advantages of being an employee.

Mazars gave me the entrepreneurial foundation blocks I needed to start my own firm. I know I wouldn't have gained these had I chosen to study a degree instead. During my apprenticeship, I learned that theory and practice are two very different things. From the age of 18, I was in front of big clients gaining oversight of their balance sheets and cash flow. My apprenticeship meant that I would go off to college for a block of time to learn the theory, and then very quickly be able to put it into practice.

**[Follow Grace on LinkedIn](#)**

# How being self employed has helped to shape my career -

Written by our ambassador **Grace Hardy, Accountant**

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Having the chance to see inside so many other businesses was the thing I found most helpful when I came to start my own. Learning from people above you is so valuable: you just don't get that at university. For three years, I'd learned directly from experienced accountants. I was encouraged to ask as many questions as possible to learn something new every day. Working while studying did wonders for my early career development. In my second year, aged just 19, I was helping to train graduates who were older than me who had all the theory but not the practical experience.

For example, younger people can often be intimidated by phone calls or presentations at work, and struggle to engage in corporate talk. But communicating with clients is a big part of my job and is essential for any entrepreneur. Thankfully my apprenticeship really built up my confidence; by the end of the apprenticeship I became used to finding a way to get my point of view across and strive for the best outcome which was a valuable experience.

To all those budding young entrepreneurs who don't want to go to university, here's what no-one told me: there is another choice. And it's the best one you can make.

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