

Apprentice insight: Life as an apprentice at J. Murphy & Sons

Meet Alex, a former T Level student and current level 6 Civil engineer degree apprentice at J. Murphy & Sons



Before we get on to your apprenticeship, which T Level did you do and what did it involve?

I did a T Level in Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction. The first year covered content like Sustainability, Bills of Quantities (BOQ - documents prepared by a quantity surveyor to

define the quality and quantity of works required), and design using Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Revit (architecture and design software).

The second year included a mock project, in which we covered more of the surveying element, and this helped us to prepare and understand what the exam project would be like.

We also did an industry placement which consisted of 315 hours and was done either weekly or in blocks (during time off college).

What made you choose to do a T Level?

I chose the T Level as at the time, I was interested in civil engineering and quantity surveying. There didn't seem to be a course that covered both, so when I went to look at the courses available at York College, I noticed the T Level. The thing that made me definitely choose the T Level was the industry placement. It was the only course at the time that had it. I knew I wanted to go down the apprenticeship route and thought the placement could help with getting an apprenticeship.

What did you enjoy most about your T Level?

I enjoyed the industry placement the most as it provided me with an insight into the realities of the careers I was considering, and allowed me to view ones I had not thought of, like planning. In terms of the academic side, I liked the surveying part of it.

What opportunities has your T Level given you?

The T Level has given me my apprenticeship. I did my T Level industry placement at J. Murphy & Sons and halfway through the placement, they offered me an apprenticeship. My T Level also allowed me to do a degree apprenticeship. I hadn't considered doing a degree as I did not plan to go to university until I got my apprenticeship.

Tell us about your apprenticeship and why you have chosen this career?

I wanted to become an apprentice as full-time university did not appeal to me, and having family and friends in the industry, I knew that doing an apprenticeship was the best route for this sector.

After my T Level placement at J. Murphy and Sons, I realised Civil Engineering was more for me than Quantity Surveying, contrary to what I initially thought when starting my T Level. I am now doing a Level 6 degree apprenticeship in Civil engineering at Teesside University in Middlesbrough.

What is a typical working day like?

When I am off site, I will complete the documentation side, which includes material inspections, records of inspections, redline drawings when the job is complete, construction records and any other documentation needed for that job. On site, I will complete any monitoring needed for the job. This can include track monitoring or water monitoring (this depends on what the job is and what the site requirements are for the job). I will also do any setting out or marking out that is required as the project is being completed.

T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

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How is your apprenticeship delivered?

I go to university one day a week for two semesters. It changed to three once I started the degree (my course allows us to get a Higher National Certificate (HNC) and a degree, so I come out with two qualifications). I then also work towards my Incorporated Engineer (IEng) qualification, which the university supports us with through monthly progress meetings. The IEng will allow me to be recognised by the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) as an incorporated engineer once I finish the degree learning and sit my End Point Assessment (EPA). Time management is key to balancing university and work!

How did your T Level help prepare you for an apprenticeship?

The T Level allowed me to have an understanding of the academic side of construction that A-levels wouldn't have provided. The work placement provided the reality of the jobs I was thinking about going into. This allowed me to make an informed decision on what apprenticeship I wanted to do (which for me was civil engineering compared to quantity surveying which I had previously considered). My T Level also allowed me to understand the expectations of the job I was going into, and gain experience ahead of my apprenticeship, compared to other apprentices who joined without any work experience.

Who is your inspiration?

I would say having my stepdad in the industry as a designer for signalling, and my older sister as an intermediate mechanical design engineer apprentice did help inspire me. It allowed me to understand more about the industry and what the apprenticeship route is like. My younger sister is also an apprentice electrical design engineer!

What is your proudest moment and do you have any specific goals?

I think my proudest moment was getting the apprenticeship offer and my ultimate goal is to complete my degree and IEng and then become chartered in the future.

What would your advice be to students and parents about apprenticeships?

I would say definitely look into apprenticeships. It means you have no university debt and for certain industries the apprenticeship route may be better. I would also say make sure it's 100% for you - working and learning can be a challenge, but with good time management and support from your colleagues it can be done.

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To find out more about apprenticeships with J Murphy & Sons, visit:

www.murphygroup.com/careers/early-careers/apprenticeships



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T Levels are an alternative to A-levels, apprenticeships and other 16 to 19 courses. Equivalent in size to 3 A-levels, a T Level focuses on vocational skills and can help students into skilled employment, higher study or apprenticeships. Each T Level includes an in-depth industry placement that lasts at least 45 days. Students get valuable experience in the workplace and employers get early sight of the new talent in their industry.

To find out more about T Levels, visit: <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>



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