



Abyl Kaium

Jaguar Land Rover, Electrical Integration Engineer (degree apprentice)

I initially wanted to do a sponsored degree with Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), as the apprenticeship didn't exist when I first looked at the company, but the high university tuition fees put me off. I also saw that companies preferred for applicants to have experience, which you can't get on a degree without a placement year. When I saw the apprenticeship advertised, I favoured it due to the practical experience, degree and salary offered.

I have been at JLR for about two and a half years. The start of my day is spent in group briefings and mechanical problem-solving. For example, we discuss any new changes to pending issues made during the previous day and then tie them together. Then, I start to pursue solutions. Problems usually revolve around electrical faults on prototype vehicles that cannot be root-caused, vehicles that cannot be moved, manufacturing issues related to software and electrical processes on the track. My experience in solving issues with vehicles requires me to get onto the vehicles and extract data using my laptop, Vector tools and even a multimeter. I then liaise with engineers to determine fault sources, allocating and requesting engineer support based on the data I have captured. Once we identify a fix, I implement it, or offer advice to the person who should. This is just a fraction of what I have been and will be involved in.

I enjoy the variability of the work and wide exposure to the business at JLR. I get to see a lot of different processes and work on a lot of different vehicles, so most days are not the same for me. It would probably take me quite a long time to describe the various sorts of work I am involved in, as I am still learning, which I really enjoy.

At school, I took lots of subjects: all the compulsory things and more. I did 14 GCSEs and 5 A-levels, and subjects I particularly enjoyed were D&T systems and control, computing, physics and drama.

After studying D&T systems and control, I realised I wanted to get into electrical and electronic engineering. I found electronics very interesting and really enjoyed my time crafting pieces in the workshop. This prompted me to get involved in a lot of related opportunities at school, including building sets and making a remote control car from scratch. These only reinforced my decision.

To anyone who wants to be an engineer, you have to pursue it with everything you can. If you are not sure what you want to be yet, then try to get involved in anything related at school (this doesn't just apply to engineering!) or research internship or training placements. Another great idea is to try and attend free, open lectures that some universities offer, as this can also offer insight. I'd really encourage girls to think about engineering from a younger age too (from 10 years old onwards, or even earlier if you'd like). I think it's easier to inspire a genuine interest if you start early. From what I've witnessed, it's not so much that there is a resistance to having girls in the engineering workplace, it's that most young women either don't want

to enter the field by the end of college, or have been turned away from, or had their interest changed, at younger ages. My hope is that, by encouraging women to go into STEM when they are in primary or secondary school, this will increase the number of enthusiastic engineers in the future. It's good to find a job you love; it's not the best to have to learn to love the job you've got yourself into.

I did not receive much advice at school, but most of the advice I did receive was focused on going to university. We had a careers officer, but we had to contact them on our own initiative. My knowledge came out of personal research on the internet and my D&T teacher. In addition, I wouldn't say school advice had much influence on my decision to pursue this path. One thing I would change about schools' approach to careers is the idea that you don't need to know what you want to do as late as year 13. I don't think this is true, as the decisions you make as early as your GCSEs can influence your ability to pursue a specific career. If I hadn't realised I wanted to be an engineer, I would not have studied maths and, as a result, I wouldn't be able to do what I am doing. I think schools need to encourage exploring what students want to do much earlier, and help them to get to that decision. My parents are quite happy that I am in an industry that I chose to be in and enjoy, and so am I.

“I get to see a lot of different processes and work on a lot of different vehicles, so most days are not the same for me. It would probably take me quite a long time to describe the various sorts of work I am involved in, as I am still learning, which I really enjoy.”

Abyl Kaium