



Dale Astley

Machining apprentice at Yamazaki Mazak UK Ltd



I started the Mazak apprenticeship programme when I was 18 in 2013 after I had finished my A Levels at college. I didn't feel as though the university route was the right pathway for me so I chose to do an apprenticeship, where I could learn a skill, earn money and gain valuable experience all at the same time.

Prior to starting my machining apprenticeship I didn't have any previous knowledge of engineering or manufacturing. During my apprenticeship I gained a lot of relevant knowledge, skills and experience, which I know will contribute greatly to my engineering career.

I chose to do an apprenticeship in machining, which involves learning how to set, operate and program the various machines we have here at Mazak. In my first year at Worcester Group Training Association (WGTA) I completed five Level 2 NVQs, these included basic machining training in turning, milling and CNC operating. I also attended Hereford Technical College to learn the theory side of the trade. The first year was a very steep learning curve for me but I came out of the training centre with a new found passion for engineering and a lot of enthusiasm for starting back at company.

My second year involved me being back at company four days a week, and still attending WGTA on day release where I gained further knowledge in milling, turning and CNC operating. Back at Mazak I began my rotation around all the different machining areas, spending two months in each section to help me gain an appreciation of the different machining types and to help me apply what I had learnt in my first year in a production situation. I also spent some time on the assembly line and in the inspection room to help me gain an understanding of where the part goes once I had machined it.

I believe the second year was the most beneficial to my training and development. Going round the different areas helped me meet and work with a lot of experienced and trained people which has resulted in me becoming a more mature, skilled apprentice.

At the end of my second year I joined the turning department which is where I am currently working. For two years I would then continue to cover all the different machines on the section in more depth and detail. At the same time I will be applying what I have learned in the previous years and also continue to develop and adapt my own skills and knowledge. I am now halfway through moving around my section.

I successfully completed my Level 3 NVQ in manufacturing and my apprenticeship in the summer of 2016, which was done in house. I worked hard to complete this to a high standard in order to fulfil my aspiration of doing an HNC which I started in September.

Throughout my apprenticeship I have received a great deal of support and guidance from everyone I have dealt with. This ranges from the training centre to my colleagues I work with every day. I have always felt supported and knew what was expected of me, I would recommend doing an apprenticeship to anyone as I believe it has been the most rewarding and beneficial thing I have done with my life. I look forward to my future in engineering.

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