



## Case study

### **Sponsored Undergraduate Technologist (SUT)**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Matt</b>
<b>Age:</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>University:</b>	<b>Reading</b>
<b>Course:</b>	<b>MEng Engineering</b>
<b>Current Job Title:</b>	<b>Software Developer</b>



it's an **interesting** world

### **How did you get your placement – what were the steps you took whilst studying?**

“During my second year of study I became aware of the Sponsored Undergraduate Technologist (SUT) scheme offered by GCHQ as a result of a University careers’ module assignment. After applying, and being accepted, I had the unique opportunity to work at GCHQ for two summer placements. At the end of these placements, having thoroughly enjoyed the experience, I applied to join on a full time basis and was offered a position during my final year at university.”

### **Why did you decide to join GCHQ?**

“By comparison to other graduate opportunities that I looked into, in a variety of sectors such as finance and engineering, GCHQ offered me what I looked for in a graduate role – a sense of real responsibility coupled with challenging and interesting work. The work done is unlike anything offered in industry and the people you work with are amongst some of the best in their fields – no other company can truly offer this kind of environment!”

### **How relevant was your subject of study in securing your placement?**

“My degree covers a wide variety of engineering disciplines and I gained experience in subjects such as Biomedical Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Control Theory and Video Surveillance. This broad knowledge base has exposed me to a variety of different working techniques and approaches to problem solving, giving me what I believe is a freshness of approach that has helped me to secure my current role.”

### **Describe a typical working day in your current job.**

“My typical working day often starts with the checking of emails and planning the day’s work (often involving sticky notes all over my monitor!). The bulk of my day is then devoted to software development; however having multiple projects on the go at any one time allows me to jump between different tasks to avoid getting stuck on one particular problem. Often I have a variety of meetings ranging from local team meetings discussing our previous week’s work to smaller project meetings clarifying and gathering software requirements.”

### **What skills are necessary to perform well in the role?**

“I feel that you have to be open to new ideas and be willing to learn unfamiliar skills and put them into practice. Obviously for my role a technical background in software development is required, however knowledge of the traditional software engineering process isn’t. I find that creativity and innovative thinking are essential to my daily work, along with communication and the ability to function in a team.”

### **What’s the training like?**

“I have found that the structured training here is very good and already within the first few months of my arrival I have been booked onto a lot of technical courses in order to quickly improve my skill set. However, the majority of my training is informal – such as being walked through a new tool by a team member or asking someone more experienced in the office to explain a concept to me. It is this informal training that I find really useful as everyone around me is really approachable and willing to help.”

### **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

“I think the best part of my job is probably the challenge offered by the variety of projects I have; each section of work really requires me to think a problem through and come up with an innovative solution – something I really enjoy doing.”

### **What are the most challenging parts of your job?**

“Some of the more technical aspects can be particularly tricky – especially if it’s in an area that I have no previous experience of.”

### **Finally, what advice do you have for other students and graduates who would like to get into this career?**

“GCHQ offers a fantastic environment for some of the best minds around, but don’t feel discouraged by a lack of technical or project experience – being eager to learn and enthusiastic about your job are ample substitutes. Also, showing prior cases of working in teams, even if they were in non-technical environments (such as a club committee) is also really useful when applying – all your experiences are useful in the application process!”