

CASE STUDY

James Watt College qualification credited for career turnaround

When the recession hit the construction industry, thousands of workers in Scotland found themselves without a job. One Ayrshire man used this difficult period to turn his career around, thanks to achieving an Engineering qualification at James Watt College and is now working as a Trainee Instrument Designer at AMEC, a leading offshore company.

Thomas Miller (32) from Stevenston had been working as a Health and Safety Officer for a number of years, visiting sites around Scotland. But when the downturn hit the construction sector, he was made redundant in 2009. Thomas took this as an opportunity to retrain, with the hope he could re-enter the labour market in a stronger position. After completing an NC in Engineering Practice, he enrolled on the HNC Engineering Systems course at James Watt College. Thomas describes how he ended up on this path: “When I was working in construction I met lots of people from all different kinds of backgrounds. I began to realise there were a lot of diverse career options I hadn’t even considered before.



“When I went back into College as a mature student, I opted to start with an NC because I hadn’t been in formal education for such a long time. For me, there was a big step up from the NC to HNC but I really relished the challenge. As I focused in on Engineering, I thoroughly enjoyed the variety of the course content, in particular the maths, draughting and designing elements of the qualification.

“The lecturers were very helpful and supportive, giving us advice on what types of jobs we could go for. Thanks to the HNC from James Watt, I am now working as a trainee Instrument Designer for oil and gas firm AMEC in Aberdeen. The apprenticeship lasts 2-3 years, which is predominantly office based with occasional offshore visits required, in order to carry out site surveys ahead of creating drawings for instrumentation needed on oil platforms. A very rewarding aspect of the job is seeing the design drawings I have created being used offshore”.

“I would definitely recommend the HNC Engineering Systems to others. In fact, I’ve been actively encouraging my younger brother to enrol, as it has been so beneficial for me and I believe it will do the same for him. It is really challenging but if you put the hard work in it definitely pays off.”

Lecturer Thomas Haughey is delighted at how much his former student has achieved: “Thomas worked incredibly hard during his time at James Watt College, showing great focus and determination. He had a positive effect on other members of the class too, offering help and encouragement to younger students. With the combination of Thomas’s strong work ethic and such a strong Engineering course, I’m not surprised he has gone on to gain employment for such a highly regarded firm and I’m certain he will flourish in his Engineering career.”