

Level 5 Management & Leadership Apprenticeship

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What Apprenticeship are you currently undertaking?

Level 5 Operations/ Departmental Manager Apprenticeship Standard & CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership.

What were your reasons for wanting to choose an Apprenticeship?

It was mainly about learning new skills and theory. I joined Thales as a graduate entry level job with the intention of then looking at a leadership job later down the line. So I felt it was a good idea to learn new skills and meet new people, and at the end of it get the formal qualification.

How has the programme been delivered and has it met your expectations?

Due to Covid, it all has been delivered remotely which we weren't expecting, but we've all adapted well to that. For me, I would have enjoyed the face-to-face, but it hasn't impacted my ability to learn and do the course. One good thing is that you get to meet other people from other Thales sites. Also the technology has been good - collaborative white-boarding and instant breakout sessions.

What's it like being an apprentice with Thales and Pearson TQ?

I find it really enjoyable. It's down to the individual on what you want to get out of the course. For me, I really like time out of the workplace and to learn some of the theories and strategies and take reflection in a safe space. Also I like working with other like-minded individuals, you can learn from them as well. Pearson TQ is very structured and clear on what we have to do and when things are required by. They also share research learning packs in advance of the sessions which are useful to provide context, and they give clearly structured presentations during the lecture session as well.

What have you most enjoyed about the programme?

- Learning the theory that sits behind a number of activities you experience day-to-day in your job.
- Meeting like-minded people across Thales that are at a similar work level.
- Alongside Pearson TQ stuff, Thales also offers supplementary programmes that sit alongside the apprenticeship programme.
- I've been able to work on my personal development - this was the first module that we did, and was around professional and personal development. Now I have a personal development plan that I focus my objectives and activities around. ▶

What is the most interesting thing you've learned on the programme so far?

The module on strategic and operational planning was the most interesting. This is an area that I've not had a chance to work on before and have no experience in, so has been a big area of development for me.

What challenges or issues did you encounter as part of your Apprenticeship and how are you overcoming them?

The biggest challenge is managing time to make sure you're dedicating enough to the programme. I also had a newborn baby during the programme so there was pressure from work and home to be able to block out time to work on it. To overcome those challenges I found that it helps to be open and honest with your skills coach and your line manager. My skills coach has been really flexible and open, and as long as you're honest with them they help you get through these challenges.

What support did you have from your employer whilst on programme?

Thales has been really good. I've had two different line managers and both have been supportive in dedicating time to help me assign time to take the programme. The supplementary programme sessions all count as off-the-job learning and have been really useful. My line managers have also helped identify examples of assignments to use within my work. So you'll get an assignment to write and often the evidence you provide for that is from personal experience. We would discuss how I have experienced them in my current role.

What impact has the programme had on you both professionally and personally?

Personally - the key thing I have got out of the programme is having a personal development plan that I update and work on regularly. One of the things that I identified in my personal development plan is work-life balance and time management – I am much better now at time management and being mindful of work-life balance.

Professionally - personal development also applies from a professional side and one of the areas that we worked on quite a bit on the programme is around emotional intelligence - how people react to certain situations. I am now much more conscious of how people react to these situations and how to act accordingly.

Can you tell us a bit about your current role? How have the skills and knowledge that you gained from studying an Apprenticeship helped you in your current role?

I'm currently a senior bid manager within Thales so I manage a number of remote teams – depending on the type of bid work. The key thing the programme has helped me understand is adapting my leadership style to the bid I am working on. Also how the individual bids fits into the overall strategy of the business and the importance of what I do within that.

The Managing Change module was really useful as we do a number of change management programmes. In my role right now I'm about to lead a change management programme so I've gone back into my apprenticeship portfolio to check that I am using everything I learnt on the project. ►

**What are your future career aspirations?
What do you plan to do once you have completed the qualification – how will you use it to support your future career?**

Once I've finished I'm going to take some time out of learning so I can apply the learning to my day-to-day job. Within the next 2-3 years I'll be looking for a more senior position and then a senior leadership position. My ambition is to work towards a Master's in Business Admin maybe 5-6 years down the line.

Would you recommend a Management Apprenticeship to others?

Absolutely – it's been really useful, fun, and a good way to network and meet other people across the organisation. I would definitely recommend.

What advice would you give to someone just starting the programme?

Make sure you are dedicated and motivated to commit to it. Make sure you know what you want to get out of the programme before you start. Have a good chat with your line manager ahead of committing and to make sure you have enough time to dedicate to it, and your line manager is aligned to that as well. Use your colleagues on the programme to your advantage - they are really useful to bounce ideas off. ■

A brief overview of the Level 5 Apprenticeship programme

In 2019, Pearson TQ partnered with Thales UK to develop a leadership development programme for their aspiring middle managers. The programme aimed to build leadership capacity by identifying and growing existing talent to create a community of leaders. Thales UK wanted to enhance its existing management training, expand accreditations, and provide a more consistent approach to leadership across the Thales UK group. They wanted to achieve this by using Thales UK's business objectives, bringing the best of all the management training programmes together and offering an externally recognised qualification with access to innovative new learning and a wide network of stakeholders.

Thales UK wanted to develop a programme to:

- Provide a platform to develop their people's potential support leaders to embed a learning culture by encouraging the managers of participants to do things differently
- Develop leaders' confidence, which would increase team performance, resulting in more High Performing Teams (HPT) and improved levels of employee engagement
- Develop strong leaders to manage change and digital transformation.

Pearson TQ took a collaborative approach to the co-creation of learning content with Thales UK to ensure a truly bespoke, tailored learning experience, individualised for each learner.

All learners receive the same standard of training, regardless of geography, and are assigned a dedicated Skills Coach, who acts as a mentor throughout the programme. Pearson TQ delivers a blended learning solution that includes: 1-to-1 personalised coaching, regular progress reviews, group virtual classroom and workplace learning, online resources, employer-focused work-based projects, peer learning sets and discussion, remote distance learning, and holistic assessment and observations are conducted throughout the programme to ensure progression.

As part of our continuous improvement, we continue to work in partnership with Thales UK to gain feedback from them about programme delivery/content which allows us to tailor the service offered to meet their specific needs.