

I went to University at Durham, did a law degree, didn't especially like it but I was very involved in running the student bar. We did all the accounts, all the ordering and that was really where I started to get my finance interest, looking at how you make decisions, how things work and just the way in which a business is run. So I started looking at that, looking at the type of qualification that I wanted to do and discovered the CIMA qualification, which is far more based on a manufacturing processing idea rather than the more traditional service industry that is in the UK. So it was a big plus for me, I really wanted to look into somewhere that both offered CIMA, which MBDA does but also somewhere which CIMA is almost more tailored around that. Because of MBDA being to some extent manufacturing still, and the type of work that it does, it does fit quite nicely with the processes and the understanding that CIMA give you - a lot better than perhaps some areas such as supermarkets where it's more trying to shoehorn your experience into fitting into CIMA.

The scheme is structured in that, in theory you will do three one year placements which will include a role in central accounting which is where the UK reconciliations are done to check the costs, check the overheads and the day to day running of the balance sheet and the income statement, checking the way that works. And also you'll do one year in projects, which is the area I work in, which is looking at the contracts, managing the contracts that the firm has, looking at the margin, looking at the way that the contract's performing, looking to see what areas may need to improve, what areas need to be checked upon. It is quite a wide ranging role that you can find yourself doing something different ranging from central where you work very much with finance people, and have more contact with the other Natcos in the group to projects where you're dealing more with the other business support areas; project control, project management, commercial teams. So it is two very different roles but at the same time you get two very different experiences building up to your main experience where after you come off the scheme you can look to what role you prefer, what do you want to be doing and where do you want to contribute the most.

When you join you're assigned both a buddy and a mentor. The buddy is someone who has gone through the scheme as well, Normally they will be a year above you or two

years above you which is quite good in finance because it means you've got someone doing the CIMA qualification as well, so they can talk you through that. They can talk you through the decisions that they made, of what exams to do and in what order, what fits what role, because to some extent while CIMA does dictate which exams you do in a level there are three exams in each level so you might choose to do two rather than three and there might be two which are better suited to your role than perhaps the other role that someone might come into. So it works quite well like that.

You're also assigned a mentor who is someone who is more a step removed from you, he'll be more senior, more of a guidance person you can talk to, to think of ideas of where you want to take your career, what you want to progress, where would be good to get experience, could you get experience somewhere else? The type of person who's got more of an overall view of the company and so could maybe let you know of opportunities. There are broad opportunities in different roles and different placements.

The way in which it works with the finance is that we all as grads do talk quite a lot to each other and work together quite a lot. It is a good support group because everyone's done CIMA or is doing CIMA or knows what's going on so if one person finds out about a change to the scheme they'll let everyone else know that CIMA has made a change so it works quite well. Everyone knows what everyone's doing.

The social side of the firm is really good because you get a good intake of people at the same time as you and a lot of people are in the very same position, have moved in to the area, maybe living together quite often. I live with five other people who joined all at the same time and it is a really good social network, you do get people who will regularly go out on weekends together, go out midweek and you meet people from all elements of business. I live with five engineers and certainly it helps me to some extent, the fact that I do find out what engineers are like and it does mean you meet different people, you don't just meet people you work with.

There isn't any of the "Oh you're just going out with work colleagues" quite often it will be just friends who happen to work for the same firm. There's so many people on site it's quite easy to go however long without seeing people who you work with. It's not

uncommon for me not to see my housemates at work for weeks and weeks. So it's not the type of thing where people think "Oh same people all the time," a lot of people go out, have a laugh, have a joke, it is a really good atmosphere. There's regular things organised through work as well which you can get involved in if you want to but there's also some unofficial grad social network as well where people go out to the pub, people go out go-carting and things like that so there's never short of something going on.

One of the benefits that MBDA really offer you is with the flexi-time where you can build up flexi time to then take flexi afternoons or flexi days. With studying it can be such a help that if you know you've got a study day in college coming up you can work around that, so you can either use your flexi time to take that time to protect your holiday or to protect your weekends. Or if you perhaps just need to catch up a bit on what you haven't done so far, because it is a balance getting work and study right and flexi is really good for helping you with that. You do get a lot of support from the people at work to make sure that you can get the best out of the experience with work and the best out experience out of your CIMA studies as well.