

As technical coordinator in mechanical engineering I get involved in recruiting graduates, bringing them into the business, making sure that they have the correct placements as they work with us for their first two years and following through after that as well. They come off the Formal Development Programme but then for about two years after that we still monitor their development and help them with mentors and so on to make sure that they reach professional accreditation through the institution of mechanical engineers.

I think for the graduates it's important to have a focal point. They're going to be moving around through their two years on the formal development programme, they'll have different line managers, and we try to provide that focus. Partly through having a mentor who stays with them throughout, but also myself as technical coordinator, I'm there as a common point of reference. I see all the graduates in their different placements and it helps to keep things on track.

When a new graduate starts with us we have to make sure that firstly they've got a placement, they've got a job to go into. And it's very important that it's a real job, we don't invent work for them. They come in and they join an existing team, that means we have to make sure their line manager has thought about where they're going to sit, have they got the right tools to do the job, a computer or whatever.

For a graduate to move through different placements sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's difficult. The work has to be there, the line manager has to be accommodating as well and usually we find that it works very well; in which case the line manager doesn't want to lose that person so there's an element of negotiation that has to go on. And as technical coordinator sometimes I have to arbitrate between the needs of the individual and the desires of the line manager.

The MBDA graduate scheme has evolved a great deal in the time that I've been involved with it. It's now very comprehensive, I think it's not just a process that HR tell us to follow, it's one that we actively do endorse and we make sure it works. It takes quite a lot of effort from not just me as technical coordinator but also all the line managers who are involved. And most importantly I think the individuals who come

onto that scheme, they want to develop, they want to learn, they want to get professional recognition. And the processes and procedures that we have in place now enable them to do that in a very timely fashion, I think it works really well.