

## CASE STUDY: Laing O'Rourke

Laing O'Rourke's Apprenticeship+ programme is a bespoke four-year scheme, designed to give participants the opportunity to develop a well-rounded suite of skills that will set them on a path to a successful career in construction.

There are currently 102 apprentices on the programme, which is entering its sixth year, and we are now recruiting the next intake – with 33 places up for grabs around the UK.

The programme runs over four years, during which the apprentices will achieve both level 2 and 3 NVQ status in their respective trade. The + part of the programme are the 10 additional development modules, designed to develop participants' personal skills and provide them with a wider view of the Laing O'Rourke business, discovering more about project team roles and responsibilities.

By exposing our apprentices to such a broad range of experiences we believe we are giving them the best platform from which they can take multiple pathways in construction upon completion of their apprenticeship.

Options include:

1. Carry on in their chosen trade continuing to deliver quality work.
2. Work towards a supervisory role (long term) by continuing to gain as much experience as possible.
3. Junior management role supplemented with further education, most likely HNC.

In the first two years of the programme there are six modules. Starting with a three-day induction at our head office, participants are introduced to all aspects of the programme, what they can expect while working for Laing O'Rourke and what we expect from them. This will involve meeting senior leaders of the business, various presentations on key aspects of the business and a site visit to one of our flagship projects.

The following modules then focus on personal development: the importance of attitudes and behaviors, and the impact this has on onsite learning. The modules are delivered by external consultants who specialise in unlocking potential, and we take both the first and second year cohort to the venue every spring and summer, where they spend three days facing various challenges. The challenges are all designed so that the apprentices will have to exercise problem-solving abilities and communication skills, while demonstrating both drive and one-team working, all qualities we believe are essential throughout our entire workforce.

When the apprentices enter their third year, and are now well on their way to learning their chosen trades, we then introduce two modules that focus on both Laing O'Rourke's strategy and how this is implemented on our projects. This again is done over the spring and summer, and both are linked together in a way that what has been learnt in the spring must then be implemented in the summer project-management module. During this module, three teams of apprentices are asked to act as the main contractor and deliver a small project for a client, starting from bid stage right through to handover.

The main objective of these two modules is to help our apprentices experience the bigger picture of what happens on our projects beyond their chosen trade, and the importance of each and every role on a project



team. By doing this on a much smaller scale it gives them a taste for possible future career opportunities and by walking the walk, they soon develop a greater respect for these roles and the people in them.

When the apprentices enter their fourth and final year, the focus is very much on launching their careers and the importance of their influence on this. Again this is done over two modules, and will focus on their journey in the programme to date and their learning so far. By this point most of the apprentices have had exposure to a lot of elements within Laing O'Rourke, and are now beginning to develop a clearer picture of what their future looks like. By looking back at their experiences across all of the modules and recognising key behaviors in each of them, both Laing O'Rourke and the apprentice will be better equipped to make informed decisions on their future.

A great example of what is possible with Apprenticeship+ would be Tom Darlington who we recruited in 2009 as a carpenter joiner apprentice. Tom began his apprenticeship on the King David's school in Salford Manchester and has worked on many projects in the region since. Now a fully qualified carpenter joiner and winner of 'Apprentice of the Programme 2013', he has begun a HNC in construction as his long-term ambition is to become a project manager.



"The Apprenticeship+ scheme has enabled me to gain the qualifications I wanted in carpentry and joinery, whilst working on some amazing projects such as Salford schools and the Manchester Town Hall and Library refurbishment. Apprenticeship+ also gave me the opportunity to attend spring and summer training schemes which helped me improve my all-round personal skills and knowledge of the construction industry beyond what I do on a daily basis"

Tom has really embraced all that the Apprenticeship+ programme has to offer; ensuring that he took the learning from each of the 10 modules and implemented them in his day-to-day site life, always taking on that extra responsibility and working well with both the management team and his fellow trades, making him an extremely valuable member of the site team.