



An Interview with a Foundation Apprentice

Jennifer, a Foundation Apprentice in Financial Services, was kind enough to sit down with me and answer my many questions about her experiences over the past year studying Financial Services. Foundation Apprenticeships allow secondary school students in S4 to S6 gain experience in a work environment while they are still attending school. They can work towards an industry recognised qualification, undergoing a mix of traditional classroom teaching, and real-world workplace experiences. If you'd like to find out more, check out our blog post on Foundation Apprenticeships **here**.

What made you decide to apply for a Foundation Apprenticeship?

I was interested in what they had to offer. In fourth year I did work experience at Standard Life, which is a financial organisation, and I wanted to know more about it. When they were going through all the courses at college there were lots of choices, like cookery, but financial services caught my eye, because I wanted to get to know more about it, and I've actually really enjoyed it. I didn't know anything about Financial Services before my week of work experience, but I ended up being interested enough to study it further.

Why did you choose Financial Services?

I thought it would give me a good career path, as I think this might be something I want to get into and know more about it. I was really intrigued to find out more, as I did my work experience, but I didn't fully understand everything they were talking about. Now I think that if I went back I would be able to have a conversation with them and engage more with the work.

How have you found doing a Foundation Apprenticeship?

It's really good. First year focuses on the theory side of financial services, but it's not all classroom based. We've been to the Museum on the Mound and Black Rock (a corporate business), and we've had speakers in to tell us what their experiences are in the field.

What has been your favourite part?

I've liked being able to meet new people that have the same interest as me.

What has been the most difficult part?

There's not really been any difficult parts. When I made a mistake I took it in my stride and made it better. Everyone makes mistakes so you just need to learn from it. You won't get it first time as it's all new, so the providers aren't expecting you to know everything.

Did you enjoy doing the placement? Where did you go for it?

I've finished my first eight week block of placements at Social Investment Scotland. It's been really good to put your knowledge that you learnt in first year to the test. You're part of a team in a business and being handed real life work that this organisation is giving you, so you're really trusted. It's good to know what you'll be going out to do after sixth year, so it's good to have the opportunity to practice before you go and do it yourself.

Would you recommend a Foundation Apprenticeship to other students?

I would recommend a Foundation Apprenticeship as you learn the knowledge and then get to put it to the test.

What advice would you give to anyone about to do a Foundation Apprenticeship?

Stick with it; you get good opportunities from it, so if you're engaged properly, then you'll get the satisfaction and the rewards.

Do you know what you want to do when you leave school?

This Foundation Apprenticeship has given me so many opportunities to put me on the right path. If I hadn't done the Foundation Apprenticeship and you had asked me this question, I would say that I didn't know what I wanted to do. There's lots of opportunities that have come from this, e.g. the Investment 2020 Programme. If I put in enough effort then maybe Social Investments will keep me on, or I could go on to a Modern Apprenticeship.

How does doing a Foundation Apprenticeship help you reach those goals?

Foundation Apprenticeships have given me more knowledge of the sector as a whole, as you don't have to just do finance; you could also do business marketing, for example.

I would like to take this time to thank Jennifer for taking the time to speak with me – it's greatly appreciated. I wish her the best of luck with the rest of her studies. If you're interested in undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship, speak to your guidance teacher for advice and/or an application form. Feel free to send any questions to vocationalopps@eastlothian.gov.uk

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