

APPRENTICESHIP REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

EXAMPLE



WHAT? *Considering the learning experience.*

1. What is the most valuable thing you learned through your apprenticeship? *This could be something learned either on-the-job or off-the-job.*

Although I was exposed to scientific skills and techniques prior to starting my Level 5 apprenticeship my understanding behind the science was minimal. Undertaking the Level 5 apprenticeship enabled me to get a firm understanding of the science behind the techniques I was performing, to be able to interpret and make conclusions about data generated from projects. This understanding has also enabled me to prepare in advance for project work, optimise protocols and it has given me the ability to train others. Some of the most valuable scientific skills and interpretation I have learnt is the understanding of the science behind histological staining, image processing, PCR, gel electrophoresis and data analysis as well as a whole host of other skills.

2. What was the most valuable thing that you learned from shadowing more experienced staff or from your workplace mentor?

Learning how to use pieces of laboratory equipment was a valuable thing I learnt from experienced staff. Being able to use a range of equipment is important where I work in order to provide research support to projects, as well as training to other staff and students. Historically there had been a shortage of designated trainers for some of the specialist equipment so I was keen to help resolve that shortage. The portfolio of equipment I can use is large as this is something I have built up over the years. Another valuable thing I have learnt from experienced staff is the ability to integrate more theory into practical work, this has helped to reduce laboratory resources (e.g. less waste of reagents) and improve laboratory techniques (e.g. clearer western blots).

3. What aspect of the apprenticeship did you find the most challenging? *This could be examples from the classroom, online or workplace.*

All of my apprenticeship learning was done online which meant I did not have in-person interaction with other students on my course, and because the training provider was the ***** my course peers were not local, and although challenging not having peers you could just walk up and discuss aspects of the learning, I aimed to overcome that by having online meetings with other course students when appropriate. Another challenge of my apprenticeship was the coronavirus pandemic, as a result of the March 2020 lockdown I had to make changes to my company-based project, as a result of the changes I developed skills in bioinformatics which I enjoyed. Another challenge of coronavirus was the implementation of a rota when we returned to work after the first lockdown.

SO WHAT? *Demonstrating an understanding of the learning experience.*

4. What was the impact of the most valuable thing you learned through your apprenticeship? As provided in the 'What'? section above. Could relate to impact on your own work or that of others at work.

Understanding the science behind the scientific techniques I was performing not only enabled me to complete my apprenticeship, but it also enabled me to interpret results from experiments, draw conclusions from experiments and contribute to academic projects within my workplace. One example of this was the writing and contribution of a poster to the ***** conference 2021. This poster was presented at the conference and discussed the role of ***** in *****. This project involved the use of dissection, histological, microscopy and statistical techniques. Having a poster that I had written at this conference, was a great way to get my name out there as an early career scientist, and will contribute to my recognition in the future. I also presented a ***** in 2017, this poster had a molecular biology focus.

5. What was the impact of the most valuable thing you learned through shadowing or working with your workplace mentor? Consider the impact on your own work performance.

Learning how to use pieces of laboratory equipment such as the computer controlled upright microscope had a great impact in the workplace. Before I was trained in use of this equipment, there was a shortage of trainers, and this meant in the event of staff leave there was not a technician available to train staff and students. During my apprenticeship I learnt how to use the upright microscope to become competent enough to be a designated trainer for this piece of kit, which overcame the problems previously encountered by only having a shortfall of trainers. I have also written quick guides for students to refer to when using the microscope, feedback about these guides has been positive. As a result of knowing how to use equipment I am able to respond to staff and student requests about training on kit, and trouble shoot their problems quickly.

6. What 'good' emerged in terms of learning, from those challenges you faced during the apprenticeship? Consider knowledge, skills, resilience, working relations.

As a result of not being able to have in person chats with course peers was the ability to work autonomously and problem solve independently, this also resulted in me being more confident in the ***** work I was producing. Another good that emerged from a company based project with bioinformatics incorporated was the development of bioinformatic skills. This will open opportunities to work on projects with a bioinformatic focus in the future. The good that emerged from the return to work on a rota (2 days on site, 3 days working from home) was increased communication with the research technical team to ensure laboratories still had all the relevant health and safety checks completed, better planning of my time to achieve research project support, improved laboratory servicing and continuing completion of work.

NOW WHAT? *Modifying future performance.*

7. How do you feel the apprenticeship will benefit you in your career going forward? Consider progression opportunities and/or life-long learning skills

The completion of my ***** Apprenticeship has provided me with scientific knowledge that has been supported with hands on experience. Combining the knowledge with the experience through the apprenticeship route has provided me with a foundation to build a career within the scientific sector. At ***** years of age I am relatively young in my career but I have over 6 years hands on experience already, something that other people my age may not have, this puts me in a great position when applying for new development opportunities. As a result of completing my ***** apprenticeship, I have been able to apply for professional registration as a Registered Scientist and start my Level 6 apprenticeship. All of which will support me well in the future.

8. What would you consider as your main area(s) for further development and why?

One area for future development would be protocol development. Whilst I am able to suggest modifications to protocols to optimise them, over the next 12-18 months I would like to be able to go to Principal Investigators with a systemic strategy of how I plan to do their work and set up my own experiments to achieve the desired result. Development of this skill will be supported through research projects and progression through the Level 6 apprenticeship. Another area for development would be my leadership skills, although not in a leadership position yet, I would like to develop my leadership skills to become a confident leader when the opportunity arises, I have submitted my application to join the ***** Programme and have plans to do more advanced courses thereafter.