

***Lita Davis joined Costain in 2007 as a Graduate Civil Engineer and is currently working in the technical department at Costain's head office in Maidenhead. Lita spent her first three years at 4Delivery working on AMP4 projects for Southern Water, later moving to the Brighton and Hove project as a Materials Engineer. As part of the ongoing training and development at Costain, graduates are seconded to a design company to get a better understanding of a technically challenging aspect of the engineering process. Most graduates get assigned for at least a year. Due to her passion and commitment, Lita was seconded to Atkins for two years, at their request. Lita passed her Professional Review and is now an Incorporated Member of ICE. She is now working towards gaining Chartered status.***

***Have you always wanted to be an engineer?***

I attended an all-girls school where engineering wasn't really promoted as a career choice. When I spoke to a careers advisor about university courses and I said my passions were maths and physics, teaching was put to me as the only viable career choice. When I said that I wasn't interested in this, my careers teacher and I spent many a lunchtime going through careers flow charts until one of them suggested engineering. We looked at the subject and I loved every aspect of it.

I was the first student from my secondary school to study engineering and I still go back to speak to any of the 6th form students who are interested in a similar career path.

***What does achieving Professional status mean to you?***

Achieving Professional status to me means recognition for the professional level that I have reached and shows my commitment to my profession and institution.

***What motivates you to go through the whole process again to become Chartered?***

My main motivation to get Chartered is professional recognition and the sense of achievement once I get it. By following the Chartership route, I also have help in steering my early career to ensure I get the required experience to be a good engineer. It's also a way of monitoring my progress and development as an engineer.

***What has been the hardest part of the process?***

The hardest part of the process for me was getting my development objectives signed off at each stage. I know that for many Chartered engineers, they say it's just the start of the process and that, for them, working towards the final exam and interview were the hardest. While the exam, interview and reports were challenging, meeting the development objectives took four years to complete and each sign-off meeting with my delegate engineer would often take hours as we went through all my proofs and discussed if I was at the required standard. Collecting all of the proofs was definitely the most challenging for me.

***What advice would you give to someone considering going for Incorporated / Chartered Status?***

Just do it. I think a lot of engineers, me included, worry about the written exam and put off sitting the review because of this. But I found that having attended a local written assignment group and practicing essays with colleagues, by the time I got to the written assessment on my review day I was confident with the subjects and completed the assignment with ease.

***How has being at Costain helped you to achieve your goals and, after being on secondment for two years, how did that help you in the process?***

Spending time on a design secondment was a great help in working towards completing my training agreement and preparing for my review. The design work I did allowed me to sign off on my outstanding development objectives and gain confidence in my technical abilities. I would recommend a design secondment to all graduates intending to go for professional review as I found that it gave me great insight into the design process and how other civil engineering companies worked.

I have been very lucky to join Costain as a graduate, as I have really benefited from the structured training scheme and support network. The vast number of courses available meant that I easily met the yearly personal development target for the training agreement and furthered my technical and managerial knowledge. Costain also provided me with a great supervising engineer in Mark Owen who saw me through the highs and lows of my training agreement and helped me to stay focused every step of the way to achieving professional qualification.

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