



CHRISTOPHER MEREDITH 2019 BTEC APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR (19+)

Christopher Meredith is a higher level apprentice working for the Jacobs engineering consultancy in Leeds, where he has progressed through completion of the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment and the Level 3 Advanced Technical Apprenticeship and BTEC HNC before embarking on the Higher Level Apprenticeship in February 2018. But Chris's story doesn't start there.

It starts several years before this when Chris enrolled at the Leeds College of Building to pursue a BTEC Level 2 in Construction and the Built Environment (CBE) having taken the Level 1 at school. While Chris's determined progress through these levels is impressive in itself, what makes Chris an award-winner is the fact that he has done this against the odds, lifting himself out of what could have been an unhappy future through the sheer force of his effort and personality.

In spite of successive governments seeking to improve social mobility in England so that young people of all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed and fulfil their

potential, research tells us that children from low-income families are still highly likely to perform less well at school than their peers. Indeed, the Education Policy Institute estimated that in 2016, the gap between disadvantaged 16-year-old pupils and their peers by the end of Secondary school was 19.3 months – with disadvantaged pupils falling behind their more affluent peers by around 2 months each year over the course of secondary school. In fact, the performance gap between pupils from more and less advantaged backgrounds in England is one of the largest among OECD countries (OECD, 2014).



Chris was typical of this scenario, leaving school disillusioned with no GCSEs, having been frequently suspended during his time there. With his brother and several friends having already fallen foul of the law, Chris might well have gone a similar way, but he wanted more for himself, describing a “desperate yearning to be successful.” Having taken the Level 1 BTEC at school, Chris was able to enrol on the Level 2 course at college without GCSEs – a decision which he says, “changed his life forever.” Following a successful work placement, he was offered an Apprenticeship and has never looked back. He recalls how his lecturers jumped up and down in excitement along with him at the news of his appointment, and the pride that he felt.

Chris’s story is powerful proof of the power of BTEC and apprenticeships in helping people fulfil their career goals, combining classroom study with real-life work experience so that they can make genuine a contribution to their occupations as they learn.

Chris is now heavily involved in the technical design of highways using 3D visualisation models and drawings. He communicates with project teams all around the world and is instrumental in solving complex civil engineering problems for Jacobs Engineering.

Having gained the Institution of Civil Engineer’s Quest Technician Scholarship – awarded only to apprentices of the highest calibre – and passing the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Technician Professional Review, Chris has gone from strength to strength.

Modestly giving much of the credit for his success to BTEC, Chris is actively involved with marketing apprenticeships and higher education to other young people, through radio and television, and acts as a mentor to junior apprentices at work. He also volunteers as a Student Ambassador at Leeds College of Building, because he says, “it’s important to give something back to the college that’s supported me for 6 plus years.”

Chris’s ambition is to finish his degree and ‘hopefully progress through the ranks of my company’. Chris is an excellent role model for apprentices - and living proof that with hard work and determination you can achieve anything you want. A very worthy winner of the BTEC Apprentice of the Year 2019 (19+) award and BTEC Student of the Year 2019.

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