

STEM RETURNERS CASE STUDY

Stemreturners.com



THE PROGRAMME



490

In total the STEM Returners programme has returned 490 STEM professionals specialising in over 20 STEM disciplines

96% have secured a permanent position within their host organisation

46% of STEM Returners are women vs 10.4% of professional engineers

34% are from minority ethnic groups vs 9% of engineers

100% of companies who have taken part have recruited Returners



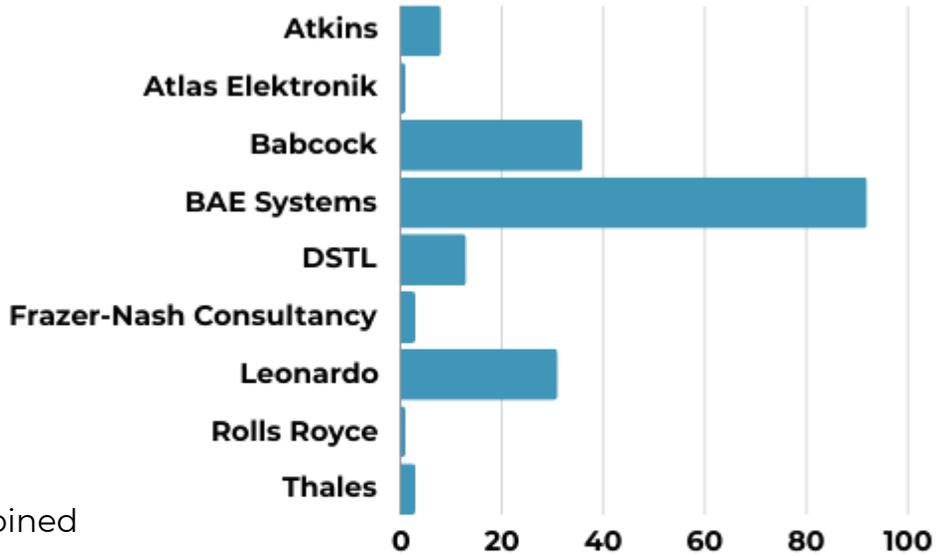
UKNEST MEMBERS STEM RETURNERS PROGRAMME



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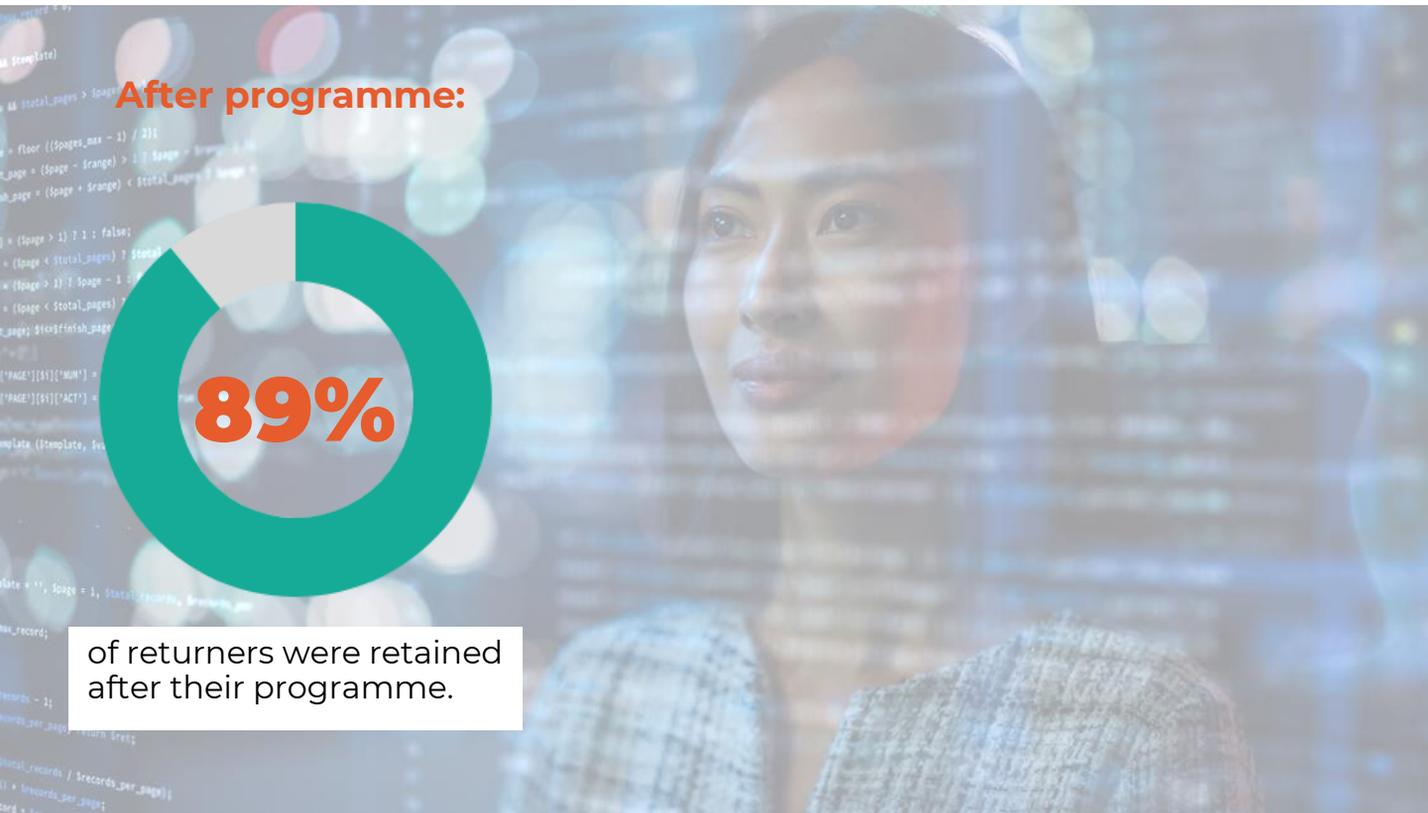
188

returners joined a STEM Returner programme with a UKNEST member organisation.



33%

of returners who joined programmes were female vs 10.4% engineering industry average.



After programme:



of returners were retained after their programme.

PRESS COVERAGE



[Thales in the UK launches second STEM Returners programme - ADS Advance](#)

MACHINERY

[Babcock extend jobs scheme that helps engineers get back to work after career break \(machinery.co.uk\)](#)



[The Portsmouth based firm helping over 80 engineers return to the STEM industry](#)



[Rolls-Royce forms new partnership to support STEM - Aerospace Manufacturing \(aero-mag.com\)](#)

PRESS COVERAGE



[Gender imbalance in STEM careers addressed with returners programme \(engineeringspecifier.com\)](http://engineeringspecifier.com)



[STEM Returners welcomed at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)



[Atlas Elektronik encourage more engineers to return to work after career breaks | Dorset Echo](#)



[STEM Returners, Leonardo UK launch new electronics engineering jobs scheme \(electronicsweekly.com\)](http://electronicsweekly.com)

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Charlotte Minton Config Engineer

How did you find out about the STEM Returners Programme?

I came across the STEM Returners Programme by chance. I was sat waiting to collect my daughter from school and checking through my emails. There was one from her school with a link to a wider communications piece. I had a few extra minutes and clicked on the link and there on the second page was an advert for the STEM Returners Programme.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme.

I was working at the local Primary School as the IT Manager/SEN Coordinator and had recently been thinking about returning to an Engineering role. Initially I had dismissed the idea as I really wasn't sure what training I would need to come back into the industry or what entry level positions would be suitable. There was also a lot of doubt over whether I would be considered after such a long absence. I had taken a career break 10 years previously, after my first child started school and had retrained as a High Level Teacher, teaching Computer Science. Before my career break, I worked in the Defence industry leading multiple Configuration and Data Management programmes, a demanding role which took me away from home frequently. When this started impacting my daughter, I made the choice to find a more flexible role.

Why did you apply for the BAE STEM Returners Programme?

After seeing the advert, I went home and started drafting up my application.

I was excited by the idea of restarting my career, something for me after many years of being a mum. I didn't send the application straight away mostly due to having self-doubt as to whether I would qualify.

How has the Programme helped you restart your career?

A member of the STEM Programme team contacted me straight away and discussed my application. I remember the call and remember feeling so nervous but all my worries were put aside almost instantly and I felt encouraged that my application would be of interest. I was then contacted again with a list of possible roles and employers who would like to have an informal chat. I chose to progress the role with BAE Systems because I had worked for them previously, knew the company well and the location was perfect. The meeting went well and I felt there was a strong appreciation and understanding for my nervousness and the support required to return to engineering. I was offered the role immediately and started 3 months later. I joined BAE at a senior level, managing a small team and working on a very exciting project for the Royal Navy and I still pinch myself sometimes that I'm here and that's all thanks to the STEM Programme.

How do you feel about the support offered by BAE as a company?

The support offered by BAE has been great, I have regular reviews with my line manager, training opportunities and have a great development plan to work towards.

What has happened since joining the Programme?

I joined BAE in October 2019 as the Principal Configuration Engineer for the Type 26 Programme and was made a full-time employee in November 2019. In January 2022, I was promoted to the Digital Data Manager for ILS covering multiple programmes, a role I am really enjoying.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break?

Looking back now, I held the unfounded belief that the skills I had gained during my time away from engineering weren't applicable but actually I couldn't have been more wrong. I also suffered with self-doubt but taking that first step, whilst the hardest, was the best decision I could have made. The STEM Programme is designed and tailored to meet the needs of the individual. Having the introductory period helps both the employee and employer make the right and informed decisions in terms of moving forward. Take the chance and the programme is there to support you every step of the way

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I still pinch myself sometimes that I'm here and

that's all thanks to the STEM Programme.

BAE SYSTEMS

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Rojuane Irish Senior Project Professional



How did you find out about the STEM Returners Programme?

I came across the STEM Returners Programme whilst looking for career opportunities on LinkedIn.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme.

Before joining the STEM Returners Programme, I had just finished my undergraduate degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering with a 2:1 honours and was applying for jobs in order to start my career and gain some experience. I found the job market very difficult, I had amazing qualifications on paper but was unsuccessful at interviews due to my lack of relevant work experience. So I decided to take on a MSc in Engineering Project Management to further my knowledge and skillset whilst continuing the job hunt. A third way through my masters, I came across the STEM Returners Programme which ended up being the chance I needed.

Why did you apply for the BAE STEM Returners Programme?

I applied for the BAE STEM Returners Programme because I had always known about BAE. It is a reputable and innovative company that I have always aspired to work for ever since choosing to study Aerospace Systems Engineering at university.

I did some research on the STEM Returners Programme and found it had my interest at heart because I would be given a chance to get my foot in the door and showcase my talent.

How has the Programme helped you restart your career?

The programme helped me by recommending exclusive opportunities based on my suitability thus giving me a chance to showcase my talent at BAE without the conventional rigorous interview process.

How do you feel about the support offered by BAE as a company?

BAE has supported me a lot in terms of my professional development. Prior to starting my career, I had a lot of theoretical knowledge with not a lot of application. BAE has nurtured my growth by providing training courses and access to an extensive network of people that can help me along my career. I love the fact that there are periodical personal development reviews which are tailored to me and provides the support, guidance and direction that I need in order to achieve my career aspirations

What has happened since joining the Programme?

Since joining the programme, I have been given “mini-projects” to have a sense of responsibility and ownership. One of my greatest achievements was being one of the first people to implement and utilise the Business Resource Planning Tool within my sector of BAE.

This aided us to make more informed and strategic decisions around resource allocation & recruitment. This success contributed towards getting a promotion from graduate project controller to “Senior Project Professional – Planning, Monitoring & Control” after the 12 week programme at BAE.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break?

Do not give up! It is very easy to lose confidence and feel discouraged when on the job hunt. Keep going, your breakthrough is around the corner



I love the fact that there are periodical personal development reviews which are tailored to me and provides the support, guidance and direction that I need in order to achieve my career aspirations.

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Amy Haddock Mission Systems Engineer



How did you find out about the STEM Returners Programme?

Internet searches when looking for suitable jobs to apply for.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme

Having completed a degree in Engineering, I gained my PCGE and taught Physics to 13 – 18 year olds. As a career change I joined the RN and started officer training at Dartmouth, however I ended up being medically discharged. After a year of recovering at home I started looking for jobs again.

Why did you apply for the BAE STEM Returners Programme?

I felt like I was in limbo land with regards to applying for jobs. I was too old to apply for any of the Grad schemes but didn't have the experience required to apply for the other jobs advertised. It also felt like most people/recruiting companies couldn't see past me being a teacher. STEM Returners saw the transferable skills I had and BAE could see that I was willing and able to learn.

How has the Programme helped you restart your career?

BAE is now training me to be a combat systems engineer.

How do you feel about the support offered by BAE as a company?

I joined the company during the middle of the pandemic, however my manager made an effort to meet with me in person so that I could learn about the project and different aspects of the job. Everyone I have met has been supportive and if I haven't understood something then taken the time to go through it with me. There are a lot of acronyms to learn!

What has happened since joining the Programme?

I have become more involved in the project and taken more of a leading role with respect to export control issues within our group.

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STEM Returners saw the transferable skills I had and BAE could see that I was willing and able to learn.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break?

Be brave and highlight the skills you have, even if they are from another sector or you feel like they may have faded.

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RETURNER CASE STUDIES

Cathy Cojeen Project Engineer



One of Leonardo’s STEM Returners’ success stories is Cathy Cojeen, from Southampton, who did a placement with Leonardo before joining the company full time as a Project Engineer.

After graduating with an engineering degree from the University of Southampton, Cathy was the only female employee at an engineering consultancy firm. She then went into STEM education and for 21 years (1999 to 2020) worked to inspire more young girls to get into science, maths and engineering. After having her own children, Cathy was ready for a new challenge and wanted to get back into the engineering industry but felt she would not match the specifications on job adverts.

Cathy said:

“Every engineering job I looked at wanted two to five years’ experience and IT skills that I was not proficient in. I discussed my prospects with a few contacts and reached out to people on LinkedIn, but I came to the conclusion that my CV would never be considered unless I had up-to-date skills, so I decided to return to university to study a masters in engineering. The future was very uncertain for me, and several friends voiced their concern that I was leaving a secure job in teaching to pursue a previous career, especially during the pandemic.”

“Whilst saving to become a student again, during my last year of teaching, I saw the STEM Returners scheme. I was fortunate to be placed with a very supportive and encouraging line manager and I threw myself in to it. I’ve been learning so much and I feel like I add value to the projects. I am now a Project Engineering Lead, responsible for the overall engineering output on infra-red detector and space and astronomy projects.”

“I am a firm believer that we are life-long learners, but that growth and change isn’t always easy. Career breaks should not set people back. We still have ability, knowledge and often transferable skills to make a valuable contribution to any company.”



I saw the STEM Returners scheme. I was fortunate to be placed with a very supportive and encouraging line manager.

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Ian McCarthy-Lunn

Ian has recently been made permanent as Design and Safety Process Engineer at Babcock International Group after completing the STEM Returners programme, after a three year career break.

Here is Ian's story:

"I found out about Babcock's involvement with the STEM Returners programme through my neighbour who works for the company.

I had been looking for work since returning from 3 years living on the Isles of Scilly. Prior to this I worked for 7 years as a Therapy Radiographer in Cheltenham. I gained my degree in Radiotherapy and Oncology after leaving the RAF. Unfortunately, the right position was not available in the SW of England for me to continue in the NHS.

My career in the RAF was as an Avionics Engineer, so I felt the STEM Returners programme was an ideal route for me to come back into engineering, particularly in what was a completely new role for me. There would have been no way I would have applied for a Design and Safety Process Engineer, had I seen an advert outside of the programme. Once I started however, I found that I had relevant experience and transferrable skills both from the RAF and NHS. The support of a company such as Babcock was a definite factor in deciding to apply for this particular role.

Since completing the 12-week (paid) introduction, I have been taken on in a permanent position. Babcock has an "on-boarding" process which was helpful and tailored goals produced by my department provided structure to the time. The ongoing contact and support from STEM returners during this time was particularly useful.

I would wholeheartedly recommend applying through STEM returners. Don't be "put-off" by wording in role adverts, as I am sure you will find (like I did) that your previous engineering experience, alongside the life experience you have gained outside of engineering, will more than make up for any lack of experience in any particular role."

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Hayley

Hayley returned to STEM with Thales via the STEM Returners programme.



How did you find out about the STEM Returners Programme?

I saw an advert while doing a job search.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme.

Prior to joining the programme, I had been with GE Aviation for 7 years working various roles including Systems Engineer, Reliability Engineer and Programme Management. My degree is in Mechanical and Power Plant Systems. I was stuck back home in Scotland during the pandemic and when my work offered voluntary redundancy, I took it as being back in Scotland made me want to move back closer to family. That was not the best time to be looking for a job so took a role locally in a High School but after a year and once everything started to pick up again, I wanted to go back into engineering.

Why did you apply for the Thales Returners Programme?

It can be daunting going to a new job but even more so going back after some time away, you worry if you will remember everything, if you are still able to work at the standard you did before and how you will adjust to the work environment again.

When I saw the ad for STEM Returners, I felt a sense of relief because it is something for people specifically in that situation so there is the support and understanding on both sides, that there may be a longer adjustment period and additional support needed.

How do you feel about the support offered by Thales as a company?

Thales did a great job at understanding and supporting the transition. Providing a mentor within the project and realistic goal and expectations from the outset. Thales also has a unique online learning to support everything you need to become familiar with the company and its systems.

What has happened since joining the Programme?

Since joining the programme, I have been offered a permanent position.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break?

I would highly recommend STEM Returners to anyone returning after a career break. Not only does it support the transition back into STEM, but it also provides access to the top companies.



Thales did a great job at understanding and supporting the transition.

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Ryan

Ryan returned to Electronics with Thales via the STEM Returners programme.



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Thales has offered a lot of support.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme.

Qualifications are: BSc Hons, Design Engineering. Electrical regs BS7671, though superseded now.

Shop floor background, worked as a production supervisor for about 7 yrs. during which time I went to college and onto university to study engineering. I then progressed to electronic Design Engineer role for about 4 yrs.

Before Thales I worked for 4 yrs. at an avionics company specialising in cabin interiors. I was doing electrical Design work.

A good company, though the electrical work was not particularly stimulating.

Why did you apply for the Thales Returners Programme?

I'd heard good feedback from someone who had worked at Thales. I researched the company, was quite impressed with what I saw online and had quite a helpful contact at STEM Returners.

How has the Programme helped you resume your career?

I was working in electrical design, mainly because the company (AIM) have a nice working environment, good location and good package, though the work itself had become somewhat mundane after 4 yrs. The opportunity at Thales has helped me get back into Electronics.

How do you feel about the support offered by Thales as a company?

Thales has offered a lot of support. The first month is training overload, but no immediate pressure to achieve Design solutions. Colleagues are easy to reach (most of the time) and very helpful. Additionally, the system used at Thales e.g. 'Workday', 'Chorus' etc. makes it easy to get information.

What has happened since joining the Programme?

Since joining, I've moved pretty much full time onto a project as Electronics engineer. I've integrated into the Thales team quite well I think.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break or make a change in their career?

From my experience, I would say, define the goal. In my case, my goal was to move from the shop floor to Design office. I soon found out my qualifications were inadequate, so I put a plan together and approached the company... the rest is history.

So my advice is: define the goal, persevere until you achieve it!

Thank you for your time in helping me with the process. I think STEM Returners is a fantastic idea, especially as in general we're quite low in engineering capacity in the country.

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Anara

Anara joined Frazer-Nash Consultancy via the STEM Returners Programme after a 7-year break from the nuclear industry. On completion of the programme, Anara was made permanent as a Senior Engineer.

Tell us a little bit about you.

I was born in Kazakhstan and graduated from a state university as a nuclear engineer. I specialised in thermal hydraulic and radiation transport analysis. Later, I pursued a Master's degree by research in nuclear detectors at Lancaster University in the UK. I then secured a position as a nuclear engineer, contributing to the ITER safety case. Later, I transitioned to the e-gaming industry before becoming a day trader. Now, after a 7-year gap, I've returned to the nuclear industry through the STEM Returners programme.

What is your working background? If you like, tell us about your career break.

After working in nuclear engineering roles, my husband (also a nuclear engineer) and I decided to transition to the Isle of Man due to nuclear industry downturns. There, we joined an e-gaming company, where I worked in the business intelligence team for three years. Subsequently, I pursued a career as a day trader, taking advantage of the Isle of Man's zero capital gains tax. However, during the pandemic, I chose to focus on family responsibilities. Upon our return to England, although I didn't actively seek opportunities to re-enter the nuclear industry as I believed it was closed to me, I eventually found unexpected success through the STEM Returners programme, securing a role as a nuclear professional with Frazer-Nash Consultancy.

What barriers have you faced when applying for roles?

One major barrier was the perception of a long career break, as I had a seven-year gap due to transitioning industries and focusing on family. Additionally, transitioning from e-gaming to nuclear engineering required overcoming skill gap perceptions. The STEM Returners programme helped address these barriers by providing opportunities and support tailored to individuals like me re-entering the workforce after an extended break.

Why did you approach STEM Returners?

I approached STEM Returners because I saw an opportunity to return to the nuclear industry after a significant career break. Despite my concerns about the length of my break, the programme offered opportunities and support that made re-entry feasible. I was particularly impressed by their inclusive approach, which welcomes individuals with various backgrounds and career stages.

How did STEM Returners help?

STEM Returners provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the re-entry process. They helped in preparing for interviews, including tips on behaviour and handling challenging questions. Their encouragement and resources helped me regain confidence and successfully secure a position as a senior engineer with Frazer-Nash Consultancy.

What was the end result?

The result of participating in the STEM Returners programme was a successful re-entry into the nuclear industry.

I secured a six-month fixed contract with Frazer-Nash Consultancy, which later turned into a full-time position as a senior engineer. This opportunity has been truly life-changing, allowing me to reignite my career in a field I'm passionate about.

How has this changed your career?

Returning to the nuclear industry through the STEM Returners programme has revitalized my career. I regained employment in my field of expertise as a senior engineer at Frazer-Nash Consultancy. This experience has opened new avenues for professional growth and development.

What would you say about the programme overall?

Overall, I highly recommend the STEM Returners programme to individuals looking to re-enter the workforce after a career break. The programme's inclusive approach, tailored support, and commitment to providing opportunities for returners make it an invaluable resource. My personal experience with the programme has been overwhelmingly positive, leading to a successful transition back into my chosen field.

Do you have any advice for returners like yourself?

My advice to fellow returners is simple: seize the opportunity. Don't let concerns about career breaks or skill gaps hold you back. The STEM Returners programme offers a supportive environment and valuable resources to help you navigate the re-entry process successfully. Take advantage of these opportunities and believe in your ability to reignite your career. If you don't go for it, you won't have a chance to succeed.

RETURNER CASE STUDY

Chris joined Frazer-Nash Consultancy via the STEM Returners Programme in August 2023.

After completing the programme, Chris was made permanent as a Technical Clerk.

How did you find out about the STEM Returners Programme?

I was applying for almost any job across a range of job searching websites and applied for a software developer role. Shortly after applying, I received a phone call, and the STEM Returners Programme was explained to me.

Tell us a little bit about your experience before joining the Programme?

I had never worked as a developer in the software development industry and chose to go back to university at the age of 30 to get my degree in computer network management and security. The intention was to get a job as a software developer but having done well in my degree, I ended up training to become a teacher. After spending seven years as a secondary school computer science teacher, I chose to leave the profession. Whilst there were definitely aspects of the role that I loved, and still miss, I was becoming less and less enamoured with the profession and found myself moving in the opposite direction to what I wanted to do - write code! Having been coding since childhood, I thought that I would walk out of teaching and into a developer role, but companies wanted 3+ years of experience in the industry, and teaching computer science apparently doesn't pass muster, or they wanted you to be a recent graduate. This meant that I found it very challenging to get interviews, let alone job offers. That is what sets STEM Returners apart - they actively look to find roles that you will be good at, from employers who are willing to give you that opportunity.

Why did you apply for the Frazer-Nash Consultancy STEM Returners Programme?

I wish I could say that I saw the advert and made a beeline for the job, but truthfully, I had been out of work for a long time, and I was desperate to find a software developer role. I was literally on my last round of applications and was already updating my teaching CV before I got a call from STEM Returners. I explained to the Returner Support Specialist that it was my passion, and they made magic happen.

How do you feel about the support offered by Frazer-Nash Consultancy as a company?

Frazer-Nash Consultancy has been absolutely amazing - from the very first interview to right now. They made allowances for my interview, as I couldn't attend in-person, provided an advance so that I could fix my car prior to starting, and they have put me through amazing training programmes. The cherry on the cake, however, are the staff - each of whom have been fantastic. The company has several offices across the UK and staff from London, Gloucester, and Bristol came up to our office just to say welcome (I didn't know this at the time, but it is encouraged so that new starters feel welcomed). I was given a "buddy" who I could ask questions of, but honestly, everyone is so approachable that it didn't matter who I asked.

What has happened since joining the Programme?

Joining the programme really starts from that first phone call and having spoken with several "agents" from a few different job agencies, I wasn't really expecting much. But, oh boy, was I mistaken! The Returner Support Specialist as a superstar and went above-and-beyond as far as I am concerned.

STEM Returners reached out to Frazer-Nash to arrange the interview, even calling at the last minute to explain that my car had broken down and sorted an online interview. The Returner Support Specialist also explained that I was struggling financially and got Frazer-Nash to agree to an advance. I cannot thank them enough, because STEM Returners opened a door that has allowed me to join one of the best companies I have ever worked for.

I was initially on a six-month fixed-term contract, but despite this Frazer-Nash Consultancy has ensured that I have everything I need for my job, including putting me through some industry standard training courses, giving me a step up into the industry. Whilst this is really nice, the biggest benefit has been having the opportunity to work alongside some of the most intelligent and talented people I have ever known. For my first project, I was working alongside a project manager, who is half my age, but from whom I have learnt so much. I have been coding since I was eight years old and thirty-four years later I have again found my love of learning code.

Six months later, I have been offered a full-time position at Frazer-Nash Consultancy, have been promoted, and I am a part of an amazing team of highly skilled professionals who are also keen for me to succeed.

What advice would you give to someone trying to return from a career break?

It can often feel nerve wracking to step into a new role, or I would imagine, to step into a role that you used to do a while back. But taking that first step is crucial. You will have a fantastic team at STEM Returners, supporting you along the way. Not to mention the support you will get in your new role from the company, and the mentors.

STEM Returners

Registered office:

**7 Manor Court
Barnes Wallis Road
Segensworth,
Fareham, PO15 5TH**

stemreturners.com



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD

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