

Grace Ormesher-Southall

HIGHLY COMMENDED - APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR (LEVEL 4-7)



Grace Ormesher-Southall, a Level 5 Nuclear Technician apprentice at Sellafield Ltd and student at Wigan and Leigh College, is a shining example of ambition, technical capability, and leadership in the engineering sector.

Balancing a demanding Civil and Structural Degree Apprenticeship with real-world engineering responsibilities, Grace has made significant contributions both on-site and within her community.

Her impressive efforts in promoting diversity through her work with Women in Nuclear and Women in Engineering Society shows Grace's commitment to inclusivity and community outreach.



She is a highly deserving recipient of the Highly Commended Apprentice of the Year recognition.

What motivated you to pursue a career in engineering?

After finishing college, I chose to take a few years out to volunteer abroad and work full-time. At the time, I wasn't sure what I wanted to study at university, and I didn't want to commit to years of education and student debt without a clear direction.

Despite my passion for maths, technology, and problem-solving, engineering and degree apprenticeships were never presented to me as options during school or college. It was only through my own research that I discovered engineering- and specifically civil and structural. I found the world of degree apprenticeships through online resources, and I'm glad to see that awareness has grown since then, with more colleges now promoting engineering pathways than when I was exploring my options.

Since joining Sellafield and Wigan & Leigh in September 2022, I have completed my HNC, HND in Civil Engineering and passed my Level 5 Nuclear Technician. I am now progressing these both to level 6.

What has your experience as a woman in a male-dominated industry been like, and how have you used your voice to advocate for change?

I'm lucky in the sense all my leaders and teams have been incredibly supportive, and I haven't been treated any differently because of my gender. There have been rare comments from others like "you don't look like an engineer," or comments like "every award seems to go to a female," which can make it feel like your achievements are being questioned or reduced to a tick-box exercise.

Those moments can be tough, but I've learned to use them as motivation to focus on showing my value through the quality of my work, my curiosity, and my willingness to learn and contribute. I've also used my voice to support other women in engineering and encourage inclusive conversations in the workplace.

As a STEM Ambassador and Degree Apprentice Council Chair, what motivates you to take on leadership beyond your apprenticeship?

I'm driven by a desire to build a successful career and make a real impact- not just for myself, but for others. I want to get the most out of my apprenticeship, not by doing the bare minimum, but by stepping up, leading, and using my voice to make change and inspire more women to pursue engineering. Roles like STEM Ambassador and Council Chair give me the platform to do that.

How has your apprenticeship at Sellafield and Wigan & Leigh College helped you grow both professionally and personally?

My apprenticeship has helped me grow both professionally and personally over the past 3 years. I am gaining on-the-job engineering experience, communication skills, confidence, and resilience all whilst working towards my degree.

It's taught me how to take ownership of my learning, push myself outside my comfort zone, and develop into someone who's not just learning the job, but shaping my future in the industry.

What advice would you give to young women and underrepresented groups considering a technical or engineering apprenticeship?

I've learned that the most important thing you can do is to show up for yourself- taking every opportunity, pushing your limits, and growing in ways that matter to you.

It's not about proving anything to anyone else. It's about building confidence, gaining experience, and shaping a career that you're proud of. The good stuff comes when you stop worrying about outside opinions and start focusing on your own goals. Do what makes you feel fulfilled!

"Grace's recognition as Highly Commended for Apprentice of the Year is a testament to her outstanding dedication, professionalism, and leadership.

Throughout her Nuclear Technician apprenticeship, she has demonstrated strong technical capabilities in digital engineering and modelling, applying tools like AutoCAD and Revit to real-world projects with precision.

Her commitment to continuous learning, diversity advocacy, and community outreach reflects the values we champion at Wigan and Leigh College. Grace is a shining example of the impact apprentices can make across industry and society."

URSULA HOYLES

**Dean of Higher Education
at Wigan & Leigh College**





Grace has shown outstanding dedication throughout her degree apprenticeship, showcasing passion and drive cross her project delivery and academic endeavours.

Her performance within the workplace have been exemplary and she has proven a valuable contributor to the CS&A team, consistently exceeding expectations on key project deliverables. She is an exceptional and well-rounded individual who takes things in her stride, actively engages with a wide range of stakeholders and manages her workload with a calm and positive attitude. Grace has a maturity and quality that is difficult to define.

Furthermore, she is a fantastic role model for Women in Nuclear, inspiring others through her apprenticeship council endeavours, support to colleagues and contemporaries and her charitable work. She exudes enthusiasm, great professionalism and a real commitment to continuous learning. Her contributions set an excellent example to anyone looking to undertake an apprenticeship!

CRAIG FENTON

Senior CS&A Design Degree
Apprentice Coordinator

