

Investing in engineers of the future

Rogers Geotechnical Services, a Yorkshire-based geotechnical specialist, is investing in the next generation of engineers by not only recruiting graduates, but offering work experience programmes too

The geotechnical industry is frequently told that the British economy is held back by a major shortage of science and engineering students and that recruiting new graduates is a major challenge.

While recent graduates regularly report that they've faced major challenges in securing relevant work experience and placements, often competing against hundreds of well-qualified applicants battling for just one permanent post.

Further investigation points to an unbalanced employment market with larger, well-known companies relying on their industry reputation and robust marketing budgets to ensure they have the pick of the bunch.

This results in large numbers of good-quality applicants fighting for a relatively small number of jobs – pushing others back into the jobs market, often unsure of where next to look.

As a result, new graduates

regularly report that finding their first job is challenging, frustrating and often time-consuming.

However, Rogers Geotechnical Services (RGS) is working hard to buck these trends.

As part of its commitment to investing in the next generation of engineers, RGS regularly recruits and retains top-quality new graduates, as well as running a well-established programme of work experience for committed students, starting at GCSE-level and above.

RGS, which is headquartered in Shelley, Huddersfield, UK, recruited three of its current engineering team as new graduates – Imran Sakoor, Rob Palmer and, most recently, Mike Cook.

"For a relatively small company, we are making a huge investment in the engineers of the future, in terms of offering our time, experience, expertise and job opportunities," says managing director Emma Lewis.

"It's been lovely to see so many young people opting for ►



Imran Sakoor



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People in the spotlight: the trainer

Within RGS there are geotechnical and environmental engineers from diverse backgrounds, with qualifications including degrees, masters and PhDs in subjects ranging from civil engineering, pure geology, engineering geology and environmental engineering.

Consequently, we have developed an in-house training scheme that is intended to give newcomers to our industry the tools they need to become effective members of the company and to refresh the memories of the more senior engineers.

As technical director, I deliver lectures in geotechnical engineering on a Thursday evening after work, covering subjects as diverse as soil and rock description, laboratory testing (classification, shear strength and consolidation), bearing capacity (granular and cohesive soils) settlement (immediate and consolidation) retaining wall design (first principals) and slope stability analysis.

This series will continue with geology, which will include some pure geology, geological mapping, rock-slope stability, ripability, foundation design, etc. We will then consider ground improvement techniques, which are one of our many specialisms; the geotechnical aspects of highway engineering, including quality control,

and finally a series on environmental engineering.

The whole lecture series is based upon the courses that I developed while lecturing full-time, then more recently part-time, to graduates and post-graduates at Leeds Beckett University, which included BSc, BEng, MSc and Engineering Council Examinations.

During that period I was involved in all aspects of geotechnical engineering and highway engineering, together with a few guest lecturers in the practical aspects of environmental engineering.

It is refreshing to note that the lectures can take longer to our staff than they did with students as we can get into detailed discussions relating to RGS methodology and reporting issues, which all helps to consolidate our opinions. I will undoubtedly draw on the experience of our principal engineer, James Farnsworth, when discussing foundation design to EC7 as he has extensive knowledge and expertise in that area of our work. Moreover, our specialist environmental engineering team will be called upon to deliver a course on contamination, ground gas measurement, remediation strategies and validation systems.

It is considered that this extensive CPD contribution by the company will enhance the ability of our engineers well into the future.

Steve Rogers is the technical director at Rogers Geotechnical Services and he delivers in-house lectures on geotechnical engineering

► challenging technical careers and we are delighted to be able to offer them a helping hand in getting on to their career ladders.”

Historically, RGS has an impressive record when it comes to creating new job and training opportunities for younger generations and it works in partnership with other local companies, as well as supporting apprentice schemes.

Technical director Steve Rogers is particularly keen to pass on expertise to the next generation of engineers, mentoring younger members of staff, and worked as a part-time lecturer at Leeds Beckett University until last year.

Lewis says: “We are delighted to have offered a series of graduates, including current team members Rob, Mike and Imran, work experience.

“This led to full-time permanent employment for them and also enabled us to develop and strengthen our team. From an employers’ perspective, it is an excellent way to recruit new staff and help them to maximise their potential.

“Here at RGS, we pride ourselves on our work as a partner of Greenhead College in Huddersfield, and we regularly offer work experience to their students, including those studying geology at A level.

“We also support the Shelley College Entice Scheme, an innovative apprenticeship programme, and one of their students, who have regularly done work experience with us, is due to join our team in September.

“We are registered as an employer willing to offer work experience and we strive to make a very real contribution to careers provision for young people.” ▼

Rogers Geotechnical Services provides site investigation solutions and consultancy services to the construction, property development and insurance industries. In addition, it also offers a series of training sessions and short courses.

People in the spotlight: the PhD student

Rogers Geotechnical Services’ current development and expansion has led to a multitude of new incoming work, much of which I had the opportunity to get involved in, starting from day one.

This work has involved liaising with various clients and consulting engineers on a daily basis, utilising and improving my communication and time management skills. At times my work with RGS can be a steep learning curve. However, with the support of RGS’s experienced engineers, my knowledge and efficiency have improved dramatically within my first two months here.

In addition, RGS has also been very supportive of me completing my thesis. I have gained a greater understanding of the

differences that exist between site-investigation techniques in academic and non-academic settings, and much of this will feed back into my research, particularly aiding with my understanding of decision-making processes.

One of the best things about RGS is the effective hands-on training. I have been able to take on the management of new jobs early on, gaining significant responsibility, while still having the reassurance of a senior engineer checking and validating my findings.



Mike Cook is a PhD student at Leeds University and joined Rogers Geotechnical Services as a placement student in March, accepting an offer of a permanent graduate role a few weeks later

People in the spotlight: the jobseeker

I initially came to RGS on work experience in February 2015, after graduating from Keele University with an MSc.

I'd been job hunting for nine months and I freely admit that it was at times demoralising and challenging.

Although performing well at interview, I was losing out to those with a couple of years' industry experience and that's when I decided to contact RGS.

Luckily, I secured work experience based in the laboratory, helping with geotechnical testing.

After a month, I was offered part-time employment and in April 2015, I was offered a graduate engineer position. This initially included undertaking phase-one desk studies and coal risk assessments, and helping with logging.

Over a short period of time, I was given more responsibility taking on geotechnical and geoenvironmental projects. I finished my graduate term in October 2016 and since then I haven't looked back.

I was fortunate that RGS allowed me to slowly integrate into the company, starting down at the lab.

I came here having only done one geotechnical and environmental module at university. Despite this, over the past three years, the engineering team has educated me and allowed me to slowly build my skills set.

Both Steve Rogers and James Farnsworth have been invaluable to my progression and both have terrific explanation skills and patience.

In addition, Emma Lewis, the MD, has allowed me to undertake personal training to develop team building and management skills.

RGS is understanding in that one day I may move on to another company in the industry, however, while I'm here, they will help me to develop my skill sets and have funded my applications for memberships to geological and environmental bodies. RGS has grown immensely since my arrival, and the future looks to be exciting and challenging, therefore, I won't be looking elsewhere anytime soon.

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Rob Palmer is a geotechnical and environmental engineer with Rogers Geotechnical Services



Rogers Geotechnical Services offers work experience placements for school leavers through to recent graduates as a means of recruiting young engineers



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