Celebrating the IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards 2024



The IET's winners and highly commended finalists of the Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards with award winning computer scientist Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE

The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) held an awards ceremony on 9th December 2024 celebrating the brilliant women showcasing their engineering excellence and truly engineering a better world. Louise Harney, SCSC Diversity Equity and Inclusion Lead, celebrates the success of these impressive women, who all work in industries dealing with safety-critical systems.

These prestigious engineering industry awards celebrate women working in modern engineering – and aim to help change the perception that engineering is predominantly a career for men by banishing outdated engineering stereotypes of hard hats and dirty overalls.

I caught up with the winners to discuss their careers – how they got into engineering, their challenges and achievements and what advice they might give to others in the early part of their careers.

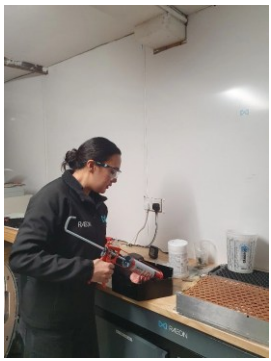
Marisa Kurimbokus – IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year

I am a Chartered Engineer with a career spanning over a decade in product design and systems engineering within the automotive and power electronics industries, including Jaguar Land Rover, Triumph Motorcycles and Lyra Electronics.

I graduated from the University of Cambridge with a degree in Aeronautical and Aerothermal Engineering. I am currently the Head of Engineering for Raeon, designing and delivering custom batteries for a variety of applications, from automotive and marine, to robotics and drones.



I work within the Senior Leadership team to develop the company business strategy, plan resources and develop company processes. I am proud to have been listed in the Top 50 Women in Engineering: Inventors and Innovators in 2022 for my work in net-zero and green technology.

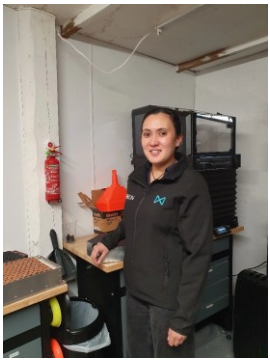


Safety should always be inherent in everything we do as engineers; from ensuring the way we work is safe, to designing products and systems that are safe for our users. Championing best practice in DFMEA and PFMEA in the design process is my way of capturing safety critical design features, and designing against failures.

I keenly support engineers at all levels, and STEM is a huge passion for me, fuelled by lack of guidance and inspirational role models when I was a student. I have set up STEM programmes at three of the companies I've worked for and I actively support developing engineers through their careers, providing mentoring for university students through to engineers applying for professional registration.

"Safety should always be inherent in everything we do as engineers; from ensuring the way we work is safe, to designing products and systems that are safe for our users"

Whilst the number of women in engineering still remains disappointingly low, I would urge all women to consider a career in engineering. The stereotypical "feminine" qualities of being caring and compassionate are too often trivialised in industry. However, these are the attributes that are so fundamental in developing safe, user-centric products and systems that are empathetic to all members of society. For diverse teams to be successful, individuals need to bring their own viewpoints, ideas and personalities.



Natalie Parker –Women's Engineering Society Prize Winner

I am a Technical Specialist within Sellafield's Operational Technology Department and provide technical, process and assurance support to front line engineering teams and wider supply chain. I am also responsible for Technical training and line management of Control Systems Degree apprentices.



Control Systems at Sellafield provide automation for operations across Sellafield which is Europe's largest Nuclear facility. These systems range from basic to safety critical and therefore it is so important that I guide engineers on process and procedures to safely managing and maintaining these safety systems.

I never considered the field of engineering during my time at school as it was never part of the curriculum. I am not a person who is naturally clever and have always had to work hard to achieve my grades. During my struggle in my first year at sixth form I decided to explore apprenticeships and was lucky enough to secure a control systems apprenticeship and I have never looked back. I progressed from being a front line control systems apprentice on Europe's largest Distributed Control System to senior engineer and now technical specialist.

"Surround yourself by people who advocate for you and don't let those who don't push you down. You can achieve anything you set your mind to!"

My advice to others is to surround yourself by people who advocate for you and don't let those who don't push you down. You can achieve anything you set your mind to!

Alexia Williams, Mary George Memorial Prize for Apprentices Winner

From a young age, I was drawn to engineering and problem-solving, preferring remote-controlled cars and LEGO over traditional girls' toys. My interest in aerospace developed during my GCSE years, sparked by a visit to the Bath and West Show, where I learned about apprenticeships from a GKN graduate.



With my parents' support, I pursued Design and Technology Systems and Control at GCSE, becoming one of only three girls in my class. After A-levels, I completed a four-year Level 6 Aerospace Engineering apprenticeship at Rolls-Royce in 2022, transitioning into a full-time role as a Deployed Lifecycle Engineer. There, I solved shop floor issues and led improvement projects, including designing precise tooling solutions.

Motivated to further my education, I pursued a master's degree in through-life system sustainment as an apprenticeship through Cranfield University. With my manager's support, I became the first person at Rolls-Royce to complete an engineering master's apprenticeship and the first woman sponsored for the course in over 20 years.

In August 2024, I became a Through-Life Technical Lead, focusing on using data and digital tools to enhance in-service products. While often the only woman in my teams during my early career, I have seen more women join engineering roles over time, which I find encouraging.



I actively promote apprenticeships as Chair of the IfATE Apprentice Panel and as Apprentice Representative on the UCAS Apprenticeship Stakeholder group and Institution for Engineering and Technology Young Professionals Committee, advocating for diversity and inclusion in engineering. Over the last year I have spent over 200 hours promoting STEM careers via Air Shows, conferences, events and in schools. I have been recognised for my achievements via multiple Apprentice Awards.

"I would urge others to challenge stereotypes, recognise their worth, and inspire the next generation of engineers."

I advise aspiring engineers to explore their interests, embrace opportunities, and network early. Apprenticeships offer valuable rotations to discover what suits an individual best. Above all, I would urge others to challenge stereotypes, recognise their worth, and inspire the next generation of engineers.

Erin Lowe – Highly Commended for Mary George Memorial Prize

I am currently in my third year as an electrical apprentice at Yamazaki Mazak, specialising in the CV5-500 production line, where I focus on the electrical assembly and adjustment of our machines.



As I spend the majority of my day in a busy factory, PPE is something that I interact with constantly. Some PPE is required to be always worn in the factory, including Mazak uniform, safety glasses, and steel-toe cap shoes.



During my second year, a group of us apprentices came together to establish the Mazak Apprentice Charity Committee. Through this initiative, we have organised over a dozen events and successfully raised more than £1,700 in the past year to support various causes.

Through Mazak, I have had the opportunity to attend numerous career fairs, give many presentations, and many in-house events too (mostly factory tours). This year, I have normally had at least one event every fortnight.

"STEM outreach events are very beneficial to the community, but also to my own personal growth "

Part of being a Mazak apprentice is being an apprentice ambassador. This is not compulsory and so some choose not to participate however, I think that STEM outreach events are very beneficial to the community, but also to my own personal growth.

Final Words

It was great to catch up with these truly inspirational women, not only for their achievements, but for developing careers in an industry still subject to perceptions that it is career solely for men wearing hard hats. Their experiences show that there are many different routes into engineering and I have noticed since my school days that apprenticeships are both more common and more respected throughout engineering.

On behalf of the SCSC, we commend the winners for their focus on STEM, engineering education and providing inspiring role models for the future generation of engineers.

Further Information

If you would like further information about the IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards, check out the website here: https://youngwomenengineer.theiet.org and do feel free to contact us to support you on DEINetwork@scsc.uk.

Louise Harney, SCSC Diversity Equity and Inclusion Lead

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