

Lydia Kendrick - TTS Student: 2009 - 2016

Current role: Associate Engineer – Factory Innovation at Mars Inc
(Mars Research & Development Leadership Programme - 3 years)

Career pathway: After leaving Thomas Telford in 2016 with A levels in Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Design Technology, I went on to study at the University of Bath, where I achieved a First Class Masters in Chemical Engineering. During my 5 year degree, I completed a year-long placement at L'Oréal UK&I and worked as a Supply Planner in the London HQ. This was where I really found my love for FMCG and desire to continue working with strong household brands. In my 3rd year at Bath, I was incredibly fortunate to study overseas in New Zealand, where I researched into the flavour perception of chocolate at the University of Auckland. This project touched upon the link between research and industry, and was one of the main reasons why I became interested in R&D in the first place, and specifically in chocolate.

After successfully gaining a place on the Mars Leadership Experience Programme, I started my graduate career in 2021 as a Customer Development Manager (sales) with Mars. Within 6 months, I quickly realised that sales wasn't quite right for me, and I still had a underlying passion for R&D and product innovation. Mars supported me with the move onto their Research & Development scheme, where I have recently relocated to London and started a role in the factory.

Advice for students: I still have a lot to learn, but from my early experiences in the world of work, my advice would be to stay open minded, true to yourself, and humble but hungry. Go after the things that you are passionate about because that's probably where you will find you excel. No one really knows where their career is going to lead, and that's OK. It's all about the journey to get there and by jumping at different opportunities, you will open new doors. Most importantly, don't be disheartened by rejection or scared of 'failure'. In my 1st and 2nd years of uni, I was rejected from every summer placement and scholarship that I applied to. When 3rd and final year came around, I was the first of my friends to secure my placement at L'Oréal and graduate job with Mars. The lesson here... stay resilient, ask for feedback and remember that there are other ways to make yourself more employable.

Plans for the future: In these first few years, I am focusing on my personal development, absorbing as much knowledge as possible and understanding what I enjoy doing, and where I can really add value in the business. Longer term, I envisage myself in a technical leadership position, most likely in the R&D function, making more strategic decisions around our innovation and sustainable initiatives. I do however get a huge amount of energy from mentoring, so I am not ruling out people leadership either! I would also like to travel with Mars and work towards chartership where possible.

Best memory of your time at Thomas Telford? How could I possibly choose; there are SO many! I was part of the school choir and Girl's basketball team at TTS, hobbies which I have continued beyond school and university. I also have some incredible memories from the Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. Above all, I think my favourite memory was when I presented at the final of the Engineering Education Scheme, alongside 3 of my close female peers. I remember how proud we were, it showed me the true power in teamwork and further inspired me to pursue a degree in Engineering; that will stick with me.

