

## Toby Ford

### **1) What is your current position?**

I'm an engineer at Jaguar Land Rover on the graduate scheme. My role is as an attribute development engineer for performance and efficiency, which I really enjoy.

### **2) What did you study? When did you graduate?**

I studied Mechanical Engineering at Warwick, completing an MEng in the subject in 2015. I started my degree in 2010 but also did a year in industry and so it took 5 years in total.

**Compared with other students for whom going to university was more likely to be expected:**

### **3) Did you experience any additional challenges with settling in and getting started?**

Neither me, nor anyone in my family knew what to expect or what to bring with me. In the end I think I ended up bringing way more than I actually needed and it was a struggle to bring it all with me. I'd never been away from my family for longer than a couple of days so it took a while to get used to this. I also didn't really know how a university works, the processes, how various things worked. I made sure to get involved with several societies / sports clubs to feel part of a community, such as the badminton club, where I eventually became part of the executive committee.

### **4) Did you experience any additional challenges in thinking about, planning and organising for what happened for when you finished?**

### **5) ...and if so, what were they?**

As no-one from my family had been through the process before, I had to learn it as I went; the importance of work experience, what to apply for, when to apply, what did I actually want to do after university. I had no contacts or previous relevant work experience which I could use in applications.

### **6) What was the implication of these challenges?**

### **7) How did you overcome them?**

I chose to do a year in industry in order to gain the work experience required to get a job in a competitive industry, this has directly led to the job role that I am in now, so was definitely worth doing. It is meant that in the final year of my degree I already had a secured job and knew what I would be doing afterwards. I also made sure to work hard throughout my degree, not just to get good grades, but to improve my own understanding.

**8) *What advice or reassurance would you have for current students coming from an atypical background or facing additional challenges?***

University really is for everyone, it doesn't matter what your background is, you will be able to make the most of your time at university. It's helpful to have a clear plan for what you want to do afterwards, to help guide your decisions, but it's ok to start university not knowing what you want to do afterwards. Being an active part of clubs can help you feel like you belong, and can also help you develop "soft" skills to go with your academic learning, often it's these skills which are more highly valued.