

WHY GO INTO ENGINEERING?

Engineers on average enjoy better remuneration than accountants or solicitors – Engineering Council UK

But engineering is not just about the money; many engineers cite the variety and challenging nature of their work among the main aspects that they enjoy about their profession. Engineering can offer a chance to continually develop and improve a product or range of products, which gives real value and a sense of pride.

One of the downsides of engineering is that you can be very busy at work. A product may have a ten-year long development lifecycle but there can be very tight project deadlines and milestones in between. Some engineering work can be repetitive if you find yourself in a niche area, as your employer might not want to lose your specialist skills.

One aspect of engineering that is often overlooked is the contribution of engineers to society. There are at least two major areas of concern at the moment: global warming and the availability of drinking water. Designing and producing solutions to lowering carbon emissions is a high priority. The need to lower pollutants affects all industries, such as domestic appliance manufacture, aircraft, transport and the generation of electricity.

With an ever increasing global population, the challenge of providing fresh water is and will become a major challenge. Some people are saying that 'water will be the next gold'.

Engineers will be needed to find and implement solutions to these challenges.

What the work environment might be like

Fieldwork is a big part of engineering and if you want to be an engineer, expect to travel – a lot. If you want to be a chemical engineer it is likely that you will need to relocate given chemical engineering companies are located all over the UK and abroad. In particular, the oil and gas industry recruits to offshore oil rigs and overseas locations, so you need to be flexible in terms of your working environment and job location. Engineers can work in all kinds of environments, from offices, laboratories and film studios to outdoors and underground.

What you can expect to earn?

Whilst engineering does not attract the salary levels found in investment banking, of the graduates gaining STEM degrees, engineers and scientists are often paid a starting salary of £22,000. (Building for growth: business priorities for education and skills, CBI)

You can also expect a good salary as you work up the ladder with senior engineers and engineering managers receiving between £33-75,000 per annum. You are also likely to receive additional benefits such as a pension scheme and many companies will offer a discount on the product they produce or share options.

Sub-sectors you can work in

Built Environment
Defence
Energy & Utilities
Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals
IT
Telecoms
Manufacturing
Transport
Aerospace.
Your long term prospects

Training schemes and graduate schemes in engineering are very attractive and typically you will receive lots of training. Anecdotal feedback from engineering and industrial companies is that there is an immediate demand for mechanical and electrical engineers. There is also some evidence to suggest a demand for engineers in the power and energy sector due to the retiring workforce.

“Our research indicates that businesses in our sectors will need to recruit 82,000 scientists, engineers and technologists by 2016 to keep up with anticipated growth and to replace people retiring. Ensuring we have a pipeline of young talent coming up through the ranks is pivotal.” Philip Whiteman, Chief Executive of SEMTA, Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.