MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

MSc Electrical Power Systems Engineering

Part-time, online

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An Interview with...

David Bain
Protection Engineer,
Scottish and Southern
Electricity Networks (SSEN)

Getting an MSc has been a long-term goal for David, despite thinking early on that he wasn't cut out for university.

Since leaving full-time undergraduate study and taking his preferred path along a vocational route, David has gone from strength to strength, graduating in December 2020 from his MSc in Electrical Power Systems Engineering, through online learning at The University of Manchester, with some of the highest marks course tutors have ever awarded.

FLEXIBLE ONLINE LEARNING

Studying and working side by side has always worked for David, and learning online just clicks for him.

He's keen for his studies to connect with his work at SSEN, which he loves, and thrives when given the flexibility to study when it suits him. With a busy family life and a demanding day job, David had to remain extremely focused and committed from day one of his MSc, in order to achieve the high standards he demands of himself.

He says: "Discipline is necessary, for sure, and support from my partner and splitting of childcare duties has been absolutely crucial to me getting through this course".

ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT

With an inclination towards online learning already established, David was impressed with the quality of the course content from The University of Manchester.

He found the recorded lectures to be extremely professional, and being 'bite-size' at just 10-12 minutes long, were much easier to absorb than traditional lectures. "Doing five short lectures in a row is psychologically much more engaging than one hour-long talk", he says.

Interactive sessions with his peers really helped David to contextualise some of the course content, through learning about how others were applying it to areas of work that fall outside of David's quite precise role.

The broad scope of the course content has given him the opportunity to learn about things outside of his sphere of experience, opening his eyes to wider issues and finding fresh approaches and new interests to pursue.

CONTRIBUTING TO REAL CHANGE

David found the course extremely valuable in terms of helping him do his job better, but it also had more unexpected benefits.

His MSc studies have demonstrated the value of academic research for industry, and vice versa, particularly at a time of great change in the sector.

He says: "The industry I work in has been relatively static, but now it's changing all the time and it's going to continue to change. Collaboration between academics and industry is more important than ever. We're starting to see this as we the network evolves from a passive system, using really interesting technologies to implement interactive smart grids and microgrids. It's too big a job for industry to do itself".

For David, upskilling in such a dynamic sector means his assignments and dissertation are at the cutting edge of industry, and will actually contribute to advances in the way things are done in the future. He says: "When things are changing so quickly, your studies can have a real influence on innovation in industry, and that's really exciting".

The MSc has made it clear to David how meaningful his role is within the greater scheme of things, and given him a sense of real pride to be part of something much bigger. As he says, "The MSc has improved me as an engineer and I can really see now how I'm making a difference".

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Email: studyonline@manchester.ac.uk
www.manchester.ac.uk/power-systems