

# STANDING ON SOLID GROUND

You're in your last year of school and you've got billions of questions flying around your head about what to do after the final day. One option to consider could be the foundation degree, which lets you continue learning while gaining essential work experience.

**T**he foundation degree is a flexible higher education qualification which offers a wide range of courses in areas such as e-commerce, aircraft engineering, hospitality, management and computing, to name but a few. But what makes it different is that universities, colleges and employers have joined together to develop the courses so that foundation degrees give you the experience and skills that are relevant to the workplace. They are also designed to be flexible so that you can study them in a way that suits you. For example, if sitting in a classroom from 9-4 won't fit in with your work plans then some colleges offer learning via the internet or in your place of work. Many courses are also offered through local higher education colleges and can be offered on either a full or part-time basis. This means you can carry on working and get a relevant higher education qualification at the same time.

## CHEMICAL BOY

Robert Dunning works for Dow Chemical Corporation in Teesside and is studying for the Chemical Technology foundation degree. After completing the first year of the course, he is finding that it's perfect for his needs:

'I was studying for an HNC, but I couldn't fit the lectures and course work around my shifts. I have to work four 12 hour shifts a week so it

was hard to attend set college hours.

'The tutors at Teesside have created a timetable that fits around my shift pattern so that I can study for the foundation degree without any problems. The course also has a "blackboard", a special online communication site where lecturers and students can set up one-to-one meetings and study groups.'

BASF has been actively involved with the Chemical Technology foundation degree at the University of Teesside since early 2000 when the foundation degree was first launched. Part of BASF's role is to organise site visits for students as well as providing experienced chemists as mentors.

## SCREEN GODDESS

Michelle Diez is a student at Ravensbourne College in Kent. She originally wanted to go into broadcasting after her A-levels, and worked for a while at Youth Culture TV in West London. However, in such a competitive industry Michelle felt that she needed better qualifications in order to get on in broadcasting. For Michelle the foundation degree course at Ravensbourne is perfect as it combines the technical and creative sides of TV production. And, as part of her studies, Michelle will also get practical experience with a number of TV companies during her course.

The foundation degree can offer assurance that you will be ready for work both during and immediately after graduation. The development of the courses with employers of all sizes and from all industries also means that you will be equipped with the technical and transferable skills and academic knowledge that employers are demanding and which are always vital when it comes to having a CV that stands out. Once you've finished your foundation degree you also have a choice – you can either move into the world of work, sure of the fact that you've got a head start in the industry, or progress in your chosen career if you are already employed. Or, if the studying bug has you, then you can continue on to gain a full honours degree, in most cases with just a further 15 months study.

It's worth noting that there are no set entry requirements to get onto a foundation degree course. Places are given to people on individual merit and it will be up to the college or university offering your course to decide if you are eligible. This will be based on your school or work track record and the existing skills you have. The foundation degree is the equivalent of an NVQ level 4, meaning you may use it as the next step on from an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship, vocational A-level (AVCE), A-levels, GNVQ/NVQ or other level three qualifications. ■

**i** For more information on foundation degrees and how they can benefit you, visit [www.foundationdegree.org.uk](http://www.foundationdegree.org.uk)