

NIE Networks Apprenticeship Programme

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - 2024



Frequently Asked Questions

1. THE PROGRAMME	3
1.1 How long does the apprenticeship last?	3
1.2 What is the difference in each of the Apprenticeship disciplines?	3
1.3 Do I have to study in my own time?	3
1.4 How many days a week will I go to Technical College?	3
1.5 Can I attend the Technical College close to home?	3
1.6 Do I get travel allowance or accommodation allowance?	3
1.7 Do I have to be able to drive?	4
1.8 As an apprentice, where will I be based?	4
2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.....	4
2.1 What are the minimum entry criteria to apply for the apprenticeship programme?.....	4
2.2 What are the equivalent grades to GCSE's A-C in the new grading structure?.....	4
2.3 Do you accept equivalent qualifications to GCSE's and A levels and qualifications attained outside the UK?	4
2.4 I haven't received my results yet, can I apply?	5
2.5 Do you accept functional/essential skills in literacy and numeracy as an equivalent to GCSE's in English Language, Maths & IT?	5
2.6 What age do I have to be to apply for the apprenticeship programme?	5
2.7 Is the apprenticeship open to females?	5
2.8 I am colour blind, can I apply for the apprenticeship?	5
2.9 I am dyslexic; can I apply for the apprenticeship and receive help at the testing stage?.....	5
2.10 What if I already have a BTEC in Engineering?.....	6
2.11 I have completed the 18 th edition; do I need to complete an apprenticeship?	6
3. APPLICATION PROCESS	6
3.1 How does the current recruitment process operate?	6
3.2 When will I hear about the status of the application process?.....	7
3.3 What if I wish to change some information on my application?	7
3.4 What will the aptitude test cover?	7
3.5 Do you recommend any practice aptitude tests?	7
3.6 Can you give me more information about the practical test?	7
3.7 What is a competency based interview?.....	7
3.8 Can I change the date of my tests?	8
3.9 Where will the various stages of the apprentice recruitment process be held?	8
3.10 Will I receive notifications on how my application is progressing within the selection process? ...	8
4. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?	8

1. THE PROGRAMME

1.1 How long does the apprenticeship last?

The length of the apprenticeships we offer depend on the programme and the level of qualification you are working towards. This can range from 2 to 4 years.

The 2024 Recruitment campaign is searching for **Overhead Linespersons, Plant Maintenance Electricians, and Metering Electricians** – these apprentice programmes will take 2 years to complete.

1.2 What is the difference in each of the Apprenticeship disciplines?

The training for each of the different disciplines will broadly follow a similar format. These apprenticeships are skilled based and delivered in a modular format which includes training and learning at our specialised training centers and also practical experience gained on site in a “customer focus” work environment.

Overhead Linespersons - are responsible for the construction, maintenance and refurbishment of the distribution and transmission overhead line network. This role will require the suitable candidate to be comfortable to Work at Heights.

Plant Maintenance Electricians - are responsible for the installation and maintenance of high voltage substations, transformers, switch gear and protection systems that facilitate the delivery of power between our transmission and distribution networks and the customer.

Metering Electricians - work closely with customers to install and maintain electrical connections and meters. This requires an in-depth knowledge of both the domestic (home) and commercial electricity systems and excellent communication and customer service skills.

1.3 Do I have to study in my own time?

Yes, you will be studying to complete a vocational qualification in electrical power engineering and also a technical City & Guilds Level 2 diploma in electrical power engineering. Both require you to give time and commitment to study and complete assignments independently.

1.4 How many days a week will I go to Technical College?

You would usually need to attend one longer day per week, usually 9am – 7pm on a Tuesday

1.5 Can I attend the Technical College close to home?

As the technical qualification is bespoke to NIE Networks all apprentices must attend together at the same college. This is currently delivered at the Northern Regional College, Ballymena usually on a Tuesday

1.6 Do I get travel allowance or accommodation allowance?

There are provisions in place to make a reasonable contribution to those apprentices with excessive travel or accommodation costs. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis and will be discussed with the successful candidates.

1.7 Do I have to be able to drive?

You will be working across Northern Ireland so it would be an essential requirement for you to learn when you are legally able to do so, and to have access to a vehicle. It is your responsibility to get yourself to work each day.

1.8 As an apprentice, where will I be based?

Our training centres are based in Ballymena, Campsie (Londonderry/Derry) and Craigavon. During your apprenticeship training you will complete modules of directed training at one of our training centres.

You will also complete onsite placements and these could potentially be in various locations throughout Northern Ireland.

To support your training and development it's essential you can work at any location across Northern Ireland.

Travel is expected and required to successfully complete your training contract.

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 What are the minimum entry criteria to apply for the apprenticeship programme?

It is essential that:

- You are 16 years old from the start date (September)
- Have, or expect to achieve 3 GCSES (or equivalent) including Maths, English and a STEM related subject at grade D or above.

Please note, only those candidates who **clearly display** that they meet the above criteria will be progressed to the next stage of the selection process. For example, if your qualification is an Essential Skills, you **must list the level** (Level 1 and 2 would be accepted as an equivalent – **if no level is provided you may not be shortlisted.**)

2.2 What are the equivalent grades to GCSE's A-C in the new grading structure?

Grades 3 to 9 are equivalent grades to GCSE A*- D. We won't accept Grades 2-U (E-G equivalent) within the new grading structure.

2.3 Do you accept equivalent qualifications to GCSE's and A levels and qualifications attained outside the UK?

You will need to prove that your qualifications are the equivalent to GCSE qualifications. There are a number of companies who will provide a letter of comparability e.g. NARIC. The NARIC website can be found at www.NARIC.org.uk. Please note companies may make a charge for this service.

2.4 I haven't received my results yet, can I apply?

If you are awaiting results you must list the qualification and state that the result is pending, when you expect to receive your result and your predicted grade.

Although any offers of employment will be conditional and we will only be able offer an unconditional contract once exams have been completed and results at the required level have been received.

2.5 Do you accept functional/essential skills in literacy and numeracy as an equivalent to GCSE's in English Language, Maths & IT?

We accept level 1 & 2 essential skills as they are equivalent to a GCSE D & C respectively. You must clearly demonstrate the level of your essential skills achieved. Failure to clearly demonstrate your Essential Skills level may result in your application not being shortlisted.

2.6 What age do I have to be to apply for the apprenticeship programme?

You must be at least 16 years old on starting date (usually September). Those who are 15 and in Year 12 are applicable to apply as long as they will be 16 by the start date. There is no upper age limit. As long as you are over the age of 16 at the start date (September) then you can apply.

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2.7 Is the apprenticeship open to females?

Yes, we are glad to say we have seen an increase in female applications and apprentices in recent years!

NIE Networks have been awarded the Silver Diversity Charter Mark in recognition of our journey to increasing equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Paula Leathem, Head of HR: "Our aim is to continue evolving and implementing innovative methods that nurture an inclusive culture in order to help us attract and retain the very best of talent. We're excited about how that will benefit the company and strengthen our ability to innovate and transform the electricity network so that Northern Ireland can benefit from a renewable and more prosperous future."

We are an equal opportunities employer and applications are positively welcomed from all backgrounds and appointments are made on merit following a fair, open and transparent selection process.

2.8 I am colour blind, can I apply for the apprenticeship?

Yes, we would carry out a visual test in relation to the relevant colours critical to your job role and primarily for your safety. You may still be suitable to enter our programme. **It is your responsibility to notify us.**

2.9 I am dyslexic; can I apply for the apprenticeship and receive help at the testing stage?

Yes, we can accommodate this and provide assistance where applicable. Please state this clearly on your application and also when contacting to confirm your attendance at the allocated date. It is your responsibility to notify us.

2.10 What if I already have a BTEC in Engineering?

This will be reviewed if you are successful. NIE Networks will consider the level and the units you have completed. However there are certain modules which you may be required to complete as the technical qualification is bespoke to NIE Networks.

2.11 I have completed the 18th edition; do I need to complete an apprenticeship?

Yes, you would have to complete our Apprenticeship Programme to specialise in one of the specific disciplines that we have advertised

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 How does the current recruitment process operate?

The selection process covers a number of key stages, shortlisting will be determined through the following stages:

Online application form - applicants will have to clearly demonstrate they meet the minimum criteria at this stage.

It is essential that:

- You are 16 years old from the start date (September)
- Have, or expect to achieve 3 GCSEs (or equivalent) including Maths, English and a STEM related subject at grade D or above
- Please note, only those candidates who **clearly display** that they meet the above criteria will be progressed to the next stage of the selection process. For example, if your qualification is an Essential Skills, you **must list the level** (Level 1 would be accepted as an equivalent – if no level is provided you will not be shortlisted.)
- Only those applicants who appear, from the information they have provided on their application form, to meet the minimum criteria will be brought forward to the next stage

It is essential therefore, that applicants fully list on the application form how they meet the selection criteria.

Please refer to [Section 2: Eligibility criteria](#) for more information.

Aptitude test - this stage will assess shortlisted applicants usually on the following topics, spatial awareness, mental arithmetic, engineering problems and design problems.

The aptitude tests are conducted by an external assessor and individuals will be shortlisted at this stage based on the scores achieved.

Competency based interview - we will invite shortlisted applicants to attend a [video interview](#) to see how well they match the essential qualities and personal attributes required for the position.

Practical Assessment (Stage 1) - this could be a practical skills test to test your hand skills or another suitable assessment based on the discipline we are recruiting for.

Practical Assessment (Stage 2) – this stage is applicable to Overhead Line Applicants only who have met a required standard at Assessment Stage 1. The aim is to further assess your skills and suitability in this area of work.

Please keep an eye on NIE Networks Facebook page for regular updates.

All applicants will be contacted at each stage. Even if you are unsuccessful you will be contacted via email to notify you. Please keep an eye on your emails and junk mail. You are encouraged to apply with an email address that can be accessed regularly.

NIE Networks reserves the right to change and amend the selection process, dependent on the volume of applicants and based on the need for flexibility.

3.2 When will I hear about the status of the application process?

We are unable to give specific dates as to when applicants will hear about their application status. We advise all applicants to use an email address that they themselves can check regularly as this is where all communication regarding their application will be sent.

Please register with an email address you have regular access to, even during school holidays for example.

3.3 What if I wish to change some information on my application?

You are encouraged to review your application to ensure you have completed all sections fully and to the best of your ability before submitting your application.

You are reminded to review your application for grammatical errors. Remember, your application is the first impression the company get of you, make it count!

Ask someone you trust to read through it before you submit it.

Applications are short and will “time out” after 1 hour, please ensure you complete and submit within the 1 hour period.

3.4 What will the aptitude test cover?

Key topics usually tested include spatial awareness, mental arithmetic, engineering problems and design problems.

3.5 Do you recommend any practice aptitude tests?

NIE Networks are not affiliated with any online practice tests. There are plenty of free practice tests available online where you may want to practice. Key topics usually tested include spatial awareness, mental arithmetic, engineering problems and design problems.

3.6 Can you give me more information about the practical test?

To be fair to all applicants we can't give too much away about the practical test. You will get a full briefing about what the test will entail when you arrive. The skills tested will be linked to the skills required for the role.

3.7 What is a competency based interview?

Competency based interviewing assesses future performance based on past behaviour. It can give valuable insights into an individual's preferred style of working and help predict behaviour in future situations.

Questions will be asked to draw information required to support the key competencies of the role.

Questions may be worded in the format of “Can you give me an example when...?” or “Tell me about a time when you...”

Responses should be structured to describe a situation or task, the action you took and the end result.

3.8 Can I change the date of my tests?

Interview and test dates will be on a self-select basis. You will be provided with the dates and times available and given the opportunity to select the most suitable for yourself. This will be on a first come, first served basis.

We can review your date based on individual circumstances and where available however due to the anticipated volume of candidates, changes should be kept to an absolute minimum and we cannot guarantee we will be able to facilitate a change request.

3.9 Where will the various stages of the apprentice recruitment process be held?

Aptitude tests and video interviews will be completed online from the comfort of your home.

The testing locations are subject to change dependent on circumstances however it is anticipated the testing will be conducted at our Ballymena and Campsie Training Environment (Derry/Londonderry)

Location will be clearly stipulated on your correspondence email.

All stages of recruitment will be carried out with safety of employees and applicants at the fore.

3.10 Will I receive notifications on how my application is progressing within the selection process?

You will receive an email acknowledgment as soon as your application has been submitted – it is your responsibility to ensure your application has been received, please check your junk mail to ensure receipt.

The shortlisting team will aim to contact all applicants within 2 weeks of the closing date. All candidates will receive written notification via email of the outcome of their application at each stage of the process. It's recommended you check your junk mail filters to make sure you don't miss any important correspondence.

You are also encouraged to “like” us on Facebook at NIE Networks for regular updates on the process.

4. ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

If your question has not been answered within the FAQ document, please email careers@nienetworks.co.uk with your query. However due to the volume of queries please allow up to 5 working days for a response.