

Arjun Sharma



I attended Constructionarium in 2014 and absolutely loved it. I was in the second year of my Civil Engineering degree at University of Greenwich and my team built the Ravenspurn Oil Rig where I was in charge of surveying. I also helped with the concrete reinforcement learning how to tie rebar and interpreting the drawings making sure that the measurements were spot on. As a team we learnt how important the QA role is when mistakes of just a few millimetres can mean having to

strip back and start again.

The practical experience I gained at Constructionarium has helped me to manage teams on site – I know that I have walked in their shoes and I understand just how strenuous and physically tiring it is to fix rebar all day. At Constructionarium we worked together as a real project team would do; reporting to the client, answering their questions and making sure all the documentation and method statements were in place. This might have seemed tiresome when we were students but I now know that having your paperwork in order is one of the most important parts of site work.

Whilst at university I imagined my career to be in a design office rather than on site but my time at Constructionarium changed my perspective and made me open to considering different types of roles when I graduated and I was able to go into interviews feeling confident that I had some practical experience to discuss.

For me the satisfaction of completing the project was the highlight of my time at Constructionarium. The week on site was hard work, physically tough, cold and windy but we worked together as a team and were able to stand on our successfully completed rig on the final day. It is quite rare in construction to be able to see a project through from the beginning to end and it was great to have that sense of satisfaction and ownership whilst still at university.

Eleanor Atherton



I attended Constructionarium in 2019 at the end of the second year of my degree at University of Leeds with JN Bentley. I had no previous site experience but took on the role of Construction Manager in our team building the Brewery Wharf footbridge.

Day 1 was a shocker and we weren't as prepared as we could have been. The weather was horrendous and most of us discovered that our clothing wasn't as waterproof as it could have been! This meant all our plans went out of the window and we had to think on our feet for the rest of the week as we tried to catch up. Normally as a student on a site visit you wouldn't be allowed to actually build anything so to get that opportunity at Constructionarium was really valuable. It was great to see the different roles on site up close and it really helped me to understand what sort of tasks are involved in each role.

A site based role was not something I had considered before attending Constructionarium and I have definitely had my eyes opened to different options. I feel like it would be more interesting than being in an office all day. I learnt so much in a week – we had designed our own formwork but it wasn't right and we had to re-build it 2 hours before the concrete was due to be delivered! I can't think of anywhere else I could learn practical skills like steel fixing but for me developing leadership and teamwork skills was equally important.

At the end of the week I was offered a summer placement with JN Bentley where I had the chance to spend 6 weeks working on different projects. I would definitely recommend Constructionarium to anyone – it's the best module I have done at university so far and I think I learnt more in one week than in the previous two years at university.

Jenna Hobs

Jenna attended Build Camp in 2014 with the Arkwright Engineering Scholarships Programme which supports talented young people into engineering careers. Build Camp was a project designed for FE students where they had to build a railway. This has now been developed into our Brunel Line project.



In 2013 I was awarded a scholarship by the Arkwright Trust which was sponsored by the CITB. The CITB introduced me to Build Camp at Constructionarium and this was my first taste of the construction industry. I found it to be an incredibly valuable experience – I had never been on a construction site before and it gave me a real insight into the industry as well as giving me the confidence

to think this was something I could do in the future.

The experience definitely influenced my career choices going forward and after my A Levels, I went on to study a BA (Hons) in Architectural Studies at the University of Sheffield. I have recently graduated and I am now a Graduate Trainee at Countryside Properties in Leeds where I will be completing six rotations around the different divisions of the business (from land & planning to development and construction) before deciding which path to take. I would also like to continue my studies to become either RTPI or RICS accredited.

Many things that I learnt at Constructionarium helped me through my degree and in my new role, such as the knowledge of different plant and equipment and health and safety processes. I believe my applications to university and employers stood out from others because of my practical experience and it is rare that students have had the opportunity to gain this first hand.

Kawthar Aljufairi



**Traffic Engineer and Transport Planner,
Mott McDonald, Bahrain**

*Winner of the Institution of Civil Engineers
Emerging Engineers Award 2018*

I studied MEng Civil Engineering at Imperial College London but had never considered construction as a career until I attended Constructionarium in my second year and took on the Gherkin project. I was elected as Project Manager by my team meaning I was responsible for stakeholder management, method statements, safety concerns and ensuring

the team worked well together.

I had taken part in design projects at university but once you leave the classroom and get onto a live site you realise you are responsible for other people's safety. It really makes you understand why tasks such as checking construction methods or managing the risk register are so important.

Constructionarium gave me the opportunity to develop skills on a small scale that I still use today on a much larger scale in my role as a Traffic Engineer and Transport Planner for Mott McDonald. Having real site experience to refer back to is important as a designer and ensures my designs are practical and realistic.

I would definitely recommend Constructionarium, everyone on my course enjoyed it. It was busy and challenging and every evening was spent planning for the next day but it was amazing to see your hard work rewarded when the top of the Gherkin was lifted into place. I gained a lot of confidence from being voted into the Project Manager role and it made me see this was something I could take on in my future career.

Agata Ostrowska

Technical Manager – Berkeley Homes (North East London) Ltd

I studied Civil Engineering at London South Bank University and attended Constructionarium during my second year. I took on the role of Project Manager on the Pavilion project, it was a challenge to manage the team at such an early stage but it was a fun week and helped to bring to life some of the learning from university

In my final year I was able to attend Constructionarium for a second time on their temporary site based in London during the Olympic construction works. We worked on the Barcelona Tower project and my team were responsible for logistics and setting out. The skills I learnt this time were much more practical and combined with my experience from the previous year as PM and more maturity we were able to be far more successful.

Constructionarium helped me to properly understand the theory I had learnt – especially the importance of Health and Safety and the project management skills I developed have definitely helped me in my current role. It was good to see how differing Contractors work and taking on different roles gave me a broader experience and insight into what my colleagues across the wider construction industry do

I would thoroughly recommend that ALL civil engineering students attend and I think universities should include this as an essential part of their curriculum each year as the ability to try out different projects enables students to take on different roles and really adds value to the university experience.

Melanie Blenkinship

Site Engineer, JN Bentley

JN Bentley have visited Constructionarium with the University of Leeds for several years and this summer I supported a team of students building the Milau Bridge project. My role was to provide supervision and support the project manager on site, as well as to spot emerging talent amongst the students. I was joined by a JN Bentley Apprentice Operative who got the opportunity to step up into a supervisory role on this project.

The weather conditions in Norfolk that week were absolutely horrendous – the rain was relentless and it was difficult to get around site without sinking in the mud. This meant there wasn't a single team that managed to finish their project by the end of the week, however, there were still valuable lessons to be learnt. In our industry you often face challenges so the poor weather certainly gave everyone a realistic taste of what life on site could be like.

The team really stepped up to the challenge, and we knew that the students who were able to cope with conditions this tough would be able to face almost anything.-This led to the business offering summer placements to 11 out of the 18 students on my team at the end of the week. The rain must have spurred everyone on as overall we offered summer placements to 26 out of the 54 students who attended.

Constructionarium is unique, there was nothing like it when I was at university and it provides a fantastic opportunity to put into practice what you are learning in the classroom. It gives a taste of what life is like on site and can be a great way of encouraging women and people from other under-represented groups into the construction industry.

JN Bentley are now planning to come to Constructionarium with our own apprentices, this will be a safe way to allow them to step up into the roles that they currently support. The benefit of Constructionarium is that it offers a bespoke service where you can choose the project and timeframe to best meet your needs.

Sam Platten



Apprentice Project Manager, Jacobs Engineering Group

I was studying for a Level 3 Construction and the Built Environment qualification at City College Norwich when I attended Constructionarium in 2017 during the second year

of my course.

Our team took on the Kingsgate Bridge project and we spent several weeks at college preparing for our visit including testing concrete mixes and learning about steel fixing. Kier were the contractors supporting our project and they visited us at college before we got on site.

Although I had been on plenty of site visits, I had no real, practical experience of construction and Constructionarium was the first time I actually worked on a site. The week I spent at Bircham Newton definitely affected my career choices, I had previously wanted to be an architect but Constructionarium helped me realise that I prefer being part of the action and seeing projects being built rather than being stuck in an office.

I would 100% recommend Constructionarium to other students, it was a fantastic experience and really helped me when interviewing for jobs. When I was asked to talk about a time when I overcame a problem I had plenty of real life examples from Constructionarium including the time the concrete delivery arrived too wet and I had to make the decision to hold off using it until it was remixed.

I learnt so much during my Constructionarium experience, including things which I already knew in theory but were made so much more real by being on site. The importance of measuring and setting out was one of these things – a small error left our formwork a few mm's out and some last minute 'trimming' was required to ensure our bridge met in the middle!

I believe my experience was one of the reasons I was successful in my application to Jacobs Engineering to become an Apprentice Project Manager where I was able to work on site every day and I've since been promoted to Assistant Project Manager working with the rail team.

Noelia Lawson



Student – University of Leeds

I was always drawn to the practical side of construction so I heard about Constructionarium when I was choosing my degree and this was one of the reasons I picked the Civil and Structural Engineering degree at the University of Leeds. I got the opportunity to take on the Brewery Wharf project at Constructionarium at the end of my second year where we were supported by JN Bentley.

Despite being June the weather was absolutely awful with never-ending rain and mud so deep that we had to borrow wellies. This really affected our progress on the project and although we made up time wherever we could, unfortunately we weren't able to finish by the end of the week. We did however, learn some things we hadn't expected to, like how mud impacts foundations and how to pour concrete in heavy rain!

I was appointed Health and Safety manager for the team and it was my responsibility to look out for safety issues over the week and report any near misses. The poor visibility and mud made this especially important and being on site and seeing the huge machines up close brought it home to me just how dangerous they have the potential to be!

I feel that Constructionarium is a great opportunity to test out how you would cope in a site based role in real life. It creates a very even playing field as when you are on site everyone is at the same level and you are judged on what you know and how you perform rather than how loud you can shout. My team were working together for the first time but we bonded quickly and worked well together. When we fell behind schedule we were all open to trying out different ways of getting back on track and we learnt how to communicate with each other and avoid disputes.

One of the main skills I learnt was how to read a drawing. At uni we normally produce the drawings from the technical information we have but on site we had to read and decipher the drawings ourselves. This experience made me realise what it is like for the people who have to use the drawings that you have designed and I will certainly make my drawings more clear in future!

I would recommend Constructionarium to anyone, it is similar to a Duke of Edinburgh type experience as you come back from the week as a changed person! I was really surprised at how enthusiastic people stayed despite the weather and I was lucky enough to be offered a summer placement with JN Bentley at the end of our week so I will have the chance to spend 6 weeks over the summer shadowing a Quantity Surveyor before returning to university in September.

Ben Langslow



Site Engineer, Gilbert Ash

I studied Engineering at Cambridge University and attended Constructionarium in my third year. I had taken part in design projects at university but before Constructionarium I didn't have much practical experience and I had never considered a career in the construction industry. Our team were allocated the Kingsgate Bridge project and we rotated the key roles so that everyone got their turn being Project Manager or Steel Fixer.

Our project was a success – if anything I had expected more things to go wrong! We had to be very accurate in the setting out of the steel supports but we put a lot of work into the

preparation and planning and it was fantastic to be able to apply the technical knowledge I had gained at university to practical tasks on site.

While I was on site I realised that construction would actually be a great fit for me career-wise: I have always enjoyed a challenge and being outside and getting involved in what was happening suited me better than sitting behind a desk. During the project we were supported and mentored by industry professionals from Laing O'Rourke and at the end of the week I was actually invited to interview for a graduate role with them. I went on to work as a Site Engineer at the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station for two years. I have recently moved to Gilbert Ash which has been great for the development of my early career. In contrast to the megaproject at Hinkley, I am now the main engineer on a £30m site. This has given me a very large range of skills for a young engineer.

I would definitely recommend attending Constructionarium as it really opens your eyes to the breadth of roles available and as well as the practical experience it gives you great exposure to the industry and the chance to demonstrate your skills to potential employers.

Chole Gray



I am currently based in New York, working for the NYC Department of Buildings as an Assistant Plan Examiner. In 2014 I attended Constructionarium as part of my studies at the New Jersey Institute of Technology where I majored in Architecture and Concrete Industry Management. I was one of six students from my school who got the opportunity to travel to the UK and attend Constructionarium alongside four other schools from the USA.

We took on the Ravenspurn Oil Rig platform which was a concrete intensive project and I was responsible for the concrete pour. I had to ensure that it was poured correctly, at the correct consistency and the right pace to avoid cracking. Although I had previously interned at an architectural practice, Constructionarium was my first real experience of a construction site and I think I probably learnt more in those 10 days than in all the rest of my studies! My team worked really well together and I was impressed at how we were able to transition from strangers to teammates so quickly. Having a common goal helped us to co-ordinate and we were able to launch the oil platform successfully and on time.

When I arrived on site, I immediately went from being a student to being a professional. The experience I had gained as an architecture intern helped me to put the pieces together and see for myself just how important accurate drawings are to a successful end result. This had a huge influence on my chosen career path and having time in the UK on my CV helped me to stand out from the crowd when I was interviewing for roles. I would say Constructionarium was one of the best experiences of my life and I would love to come back one day!

Heba Ben Amer



Structural Engineer, Mott Macdonald

Heba attended Constructionarium in 2013 with UCL and built the Milau Viaduct. I attended Constructionarium at the end of my second year studying a Civil Engineering Integrated Masters Degree at UCL. Everything I had done up until then had been theory based so it was great to get some practical experience of life on site. We took on the Milau Viaduct project and our

group picked names out of a hat to allocate roles so I started off as Assistant Construction Manager. The first day was a disaster! We couldn't survey properly, we had problems with setting out and the pressure was on – this was more real than anything we had done at university. At the end of the first day when we reported back to the client, we knew that we needed to step up, learn quickly from our mistakes and bounce back without being demotivated. We switched team roles around and I was promoted to Construction Manager. As the week went on, we learnt more and improved every day until we actually ended up being the first team to finish.

Constructionarium gave me hands on experience that I don't think I would have gained elsewhere. As a student or graduate when you do get site experience you don't normally get to do the tasks yourself; you might watch a steel fixer at work on site but you won't actually get the chance to tie the rebar. At Constructionarium you aren't watching you are doing which for me really made a difference.

At the time I attended Constructionarium, although I was studying engineering I was thinking about a career in finance. My week on site opened my mind to the opportunities in the engineering sector and definitely influenced my career choices. It also gave me an edge when job hunting as it set me out from the crowd – employers found it interesting and it was good to have something relevant to discuss in interviews.

After graduating my first job was in a design office on site and my experience at Constructionarium gave me a head start and some background knowledge of the basics, practical things like steel fixing and surveying. Five years into my career I understand how important it is to understand the construction side of design – designing a structure is very different from actually making it happen structurally and good design engineers should know how to build something as well as design it.

Virtue Igbokwuwe

Student at University of Southampton, built the Milau Viaduct in 2019

I came to Constructionarium during my first year of my MEng Civil Engineering degree at University of Southampton. It was my first experience of being on site and really blew all my expectations – it was one of the most challenging weeks of my life but also one of the best! Our group of 23 built the Milau Viaduct and I took on the role of Project Manager for the first half of the week. I had never realised just how much paperwork there would be with all the permits, risk assessments and method statements that needed to be complete and accurate. When you are on site and responsible for the safety of your team you realise just how important Health and Safety procedures are.

Our team swapped roles halfway through the week so I was able to get hands-on experience of the practical tasks as well as the management side of things. Building a real structure was very different from taking part in a design project at university and it meant that we had to trust and respect each other. We weren't afraid to speak up if there was a problem or something we didn't know which meant we could share knowledge and learn from each other. We performed really well together as a team and finished the project on time. Although our lecturers and the Constructionarium team were there to support us, the decision making was left up to us. My organisational skills definitely improved over the week, suddenly bits of paper had a real meaning and I had to know where everything was. I also got much better at time management as when it comes to pouring concrete you just can't be late!

After Constructionarium, I went onto complete a 10 week placement at Eurovia. This was really insightful and definitely gave me more motivation to complete my degree to the best of my abilities. Working on site, mainly in the highways and transport sector really expanded my understanding of things and what I loved was seeing the theory put into practice. Overall I had an amazing experience and cannot wait for next summer. Constructionarium played a role in securing my placement as I had something to talk about in my interview and experience of being on site.