

CPD INNOVATION

Experience, assessment and feedback, and formal education make up the Abbott 70-20-10 development model which forms the core structure of the Abbott Ireland graduate professional development programme (PDP), which is outlined in this article



(L-r): Paula Connolly, PDP Year 1 - Engineering and Karl Kennedy, who completed the Abbott Ireland PDP in July, at the Abbott Ireland pharmaceutical operations facility in Sligo.

Abbott's development programme attracts ambitious graduates

Experience is gained by rotating throughout Abbott Ireland sites, assessment and feedback are managed through in-house performance excellence, and customised training programmes ensure maximum benefit from formal course attendance. Launched in 2007, the professional development programme allows graduates to experience a diverse array of challenges while accelerating their career development. Graduates are given the opportunity to apply their skills in different areas of our business over a two-year period. During this time, graduates rotate through four varied and challenging assignments, each of six months duration. From this experience, graduates develop a sound understanding of Abbott as a company, as well as developing their management, technical and interpersonal skills along the way.

Structured training

A unique feature of the PDP is the structured training and development. In addition to the support from their manager, each graduate is assigned a mentor who will guide their development. A mentor provides a support network assisting the graduate through each assignment and offering key strategic advice regarding his or her career path.

To broaden their knowledge further, graduates regularly connect with the programme manager through monthly conference calls, and quarterly site visits, to discuss their assignments and experiences, training courses that would be beneficial, and to learn more about the diverse business operations of Abbott in Ireland. 2009 saw the first PDP 'graduates' complete the programme and take up permanent positions with Abbott. Recruitment is completed

early each academic year with multi-disciplined teams coordinated by Abbott's talent acquisition team which targets key skill sets. To date, graduate engineers have been central to this strategy, with mechanical, chemical and biomedical engineers making up the majority of all graduates recruited. Abbott's diverse business offers young engineers wide-ranging experiences within a relatively short time frame.

Within two years, each will have gained valuable experience in at least three different divisions, from processes as varied as pharmaceuticals, nutritional infant formula and enteral feeding device manufacturing, cardiovascular stent production, development of diagnostic reagents and commercial operations. Each of the four six-month roles varies, with PDP personnel moving among project management, technical support, health and safety, quality and sales departments as well as taking on a team management role for one rotation.

Each engineer on the PDP trains to the most up-to-date methods and tools by obtaining Green Belt Six Sigma certification and completing courses in project management, technical report writing, finance, employment law and management. The PDP, already established among Abbott's US operations, was developed within Abbott Ireland as it is uniquely positioned to offer career diversity and challenging opportunities, with nine business divisions across 12 sites, employing over 4,000 employees. This scale and diversity offers the perfect environment for ambitious graduates to experience accelerated development opportunities, early in their career. The PDP is one of Abbott Ireland's key recruitment strategies to ensure a sustainable pipeline of future leaders at Abbott.