



UK Electronics Skills Foundation

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Female Students Gaining First Class Experience

Electronics is about using technology creatively to make people's lives better and improve society. The appeal should be universal – who doesn't want to make a difference and help shape the future? Electronic engineers are in high demand, yet there remains a significant gender imbalance in the sector. Indeed, only 12% of the UK's engineering workforce is female (source).

The UKESF works collaboratively with a number of organisations and companies to tackle this problem. This year, we teamed up with **The Smallpeice Trust** to hold a hugely successful 'Girls into Electronics' course, and developed our association with **Dialog Semiconductor**, a long-standing corporate partner, to launch the Dialog Award for Female Undergraduates.

The Award is designed to proactively address the lack of women in engineering through encouragement from a young age. It supports female undergraduates who are commencing the first year of their studies on Electronics-related degree courses at UKESF Partner Universities with a bursary and a paid summer work placement to find out what the industry is all about.

Education partnerships are a key part of Dialog's **CSR strategy**: "We have a number of programmes within schools, colleges and universities to attract the best and brightest talent to Dialog. We want to encourage young people into Electronics to ensure the future pipeline for the wider engineering industry so we sponsor and mentor students at leading technical colleges and universities. We are also supporters of women in STEM initiatives."

Stew Edmondson, CEO of the UKESF, and Kevin Stenson, Chief Executive of The Smallpeice Trust, who administer the **Arkwright Engineering Scholarship** programme, recently visited Dialog Semiconductor in Swindon to meet the recipients of the inaugural Dialog Award during their work placements.

Alice (MEng Engineering, University of Cambridge) told the UKESF about her placement: "I'm in the Digital Design Department. I've spent my first four weeks learning some new stuff with Verilog and RTL coding, and also Verification. I think it'll help with my studies when I go back to university because we've studied the beginnings of what I've done here, but didn't get to apply any of it." On what led her to Electronics, Alice said, "I liked Physics and Maths, and wanted to do it in a useful way."

Katie (BEng Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Imperial College) said, "I'm in Process Technology. I've been learning a lot about how they make the integrated circuits. Being in the workplace has been a really good experience."

The placement at Dialog is the first of its kind for both Alice and Katie. Ian Kent, Senior Director IC Package Engineering, Dialog Semiconductor, said, "I'm a massive advocate of promoting women in engineering. This is a fantastic initiative; supporting and encouraging students is really important for Dialog, as a business."

Dialog Semiconductor provides high performance power-saving solutions and works with some of the biggest household and technology names in the world. Their chips are found in an



impressive range of everyday products and they operate from 33 locations in 16 countries.

Alice and Katie were Arkwright Engineering Scholars. As Kevin Stenson explains, "To be awarded an Arkwright Engineering Scholarship in their final year of GCSEs, what Alice and Katie had to demonstrate leadership potential in addition to a commitment to engineering. So from Dialog's perspective, the quality of the young people they work with is already high." Arkwright Engineering Scholarships support high-calibre engineering students aged 16–18, and are a natural precursor to the UKESF's range of programmes offering support at university.

Stew Edmondson said, "I'm thrilled to see this initiative is in now in operation. It is a really excellent example of how joined up thinking and collaboration can help tackle the gender imbalance in Electronics. Dialog deserve a lot of credit for taking this first step and for supporting the students. Working with The Smallpeice Trust means that we can provide follow-on opportunities to their Arkwright Engineering scholars as they progress to universities, which is great for them."

Alice and Katie are both looking to continue their interest in Electronics through the UKESF's **Scholarship Scheme**. This connects students with leading employers in the sector and provides them with an annual bursary, paid summer work placements, a paid-for place at a residential workshop and a range of opportunities for mentorship, networking and professional support.



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