

Swapping uni for vocational training: my journey into surveying

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Sava graduate, November '23
Under 25s case study



What made you want to pursue a career in residential building surveying at such a young age?

The profession is in my family, so it felt like the natural way to go. My dad is a residential surveyor and when I was in secondary school, if I had days off, I'd often go out with my dad to vacant properties and shadow him while he completed his surveys, and I found it really interesting.

After I finished my GCSEs, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, so my dad suggested a BTEC in Construction and the Built Environment to gain a bit of industry knowledge. I enjoyed the experience which essentially opened up two career pathways to choose from: quantity surveying or residential building surveying. I actually started a placement in quantity surveying, but the firm went bankrupt shortly after I started so I felt that was a sign to take the other path! I haven't looked back since.

I love the fact that no two days are the same and, unlike most office jobs, you get a mix of working in the office and getting out and about. I prefer not being stuck at my desk all day and I enjoy the driving element, so as a profession it ticks all the boxes for me.

What made you decide to train with Sava?

From induction to qualification the course is two years, so it's both quicker and cheaper than the traditional university route.

I did initially look at university degrees, but they were 3 years full time or 5 years part time through a graduation programme, and I wasn't sure that would be for me. In contrast, the Sava course allowed me to train largely from home as well as work part time while I studied.

The diploma is also tailored to residential property, which made it much more focused towards the career I wanted at the end of my training. Degrees in building surveying and similar subjects are usually much broader and don't have that focus, which also means they take longer to complete.

It was clear from my research that professional bodies like the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) respected the Sava qualification and so did the big surveying firms, so it seemed like a no brainer to me.

How did you complete the training – were you working alongside your studies?

I worked part time three days a week at a well-known DIY and trade retailer, which has helped get me used to the trades and all the different terminology in housing. I found it relatively easy to fit my studies in alongside this role, although I was working hard! You get a whole year for the assessment phase of the course and a lot of that phase is you working independently to complete your assessment portfolio, so I found it quite nicely paced. You just need a bit of self-motivation to work your way through your assessment tasks.

How would you rate the training you received from Sava?

I didn't have a lot of experience before enrolling on the course, which I'll admit at the beginning was very daunting. I was lucky to have my dad behind me as a mentor who helped me find my feet at the start. It was a bit of a learning curve, but I soon got the hang of it. Overall, the training I received was great and has stood me in good stead for the future. I learned so much from the practical days and, if anything, would have loved to

have attended more of these during my training.

What was the highlight of the course for you?

Definitely the four practical training days in Milton Keynes. It really helped to piece together all of the theory I'd learnt throughout my training. It was fantastic to have the trainer there in front of us answering our questions and ensuring we completely understood the learning that day. I didn't feel apprehensive about talking to the trainer because that's what he was there for, and I knew I'd only have a finite amount of time to benefit from his expertise.

I also enjoyed the assessment phase. Once I knew what I was doing, it became quite fun working through the tasks and doing things under my own steam.

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How did you feel being one of the younger learners on the course?

At the start I felt a little intimidated, but as I went on I definitely felt like being one of the younger learners was more of a benefit. I was lucky that I didn't have a family to support or a full-time job that took up all of my time, so I didn't feel the pressure as much as some of my classmates and I had more time to study.

Now that you've qualified, what have you been up to?

I only qualified in the last couple of weeks so I'm just getting my bearings at the moment. I'm in the middle of

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applying for my Associate RICS membership (AssocRICS) and I'm on the hunt for a role within a firm. I'm happy to wait around to find the right opportunity and I'm hoping to join a corporate or a firm with a good training scheme so I can get some more on-the-job experience and learn their ways of working.

Would you recommend a career in residential building surveying to others?

I already have to one of my friends who is still considering his career options. I've advised him to approach some firms and get some experience to find out if it's right for him. I genuinely think that residential building surveying is a fun job to have so I would recommend it to anyone.

Would you recommend the Sava course to others?

100% I would. University is expensive and time consuming. In contrast, the Sava course offers a much more streamlined route into home surveying.

There were times on the course when I did get stuck on certain topics, but I always felt supported by the Sava team. My assessor was also great at pushing me towards the right answers, helping me to develop my knowledge, and they always offered a call to help me if I needed it.

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What advice would you give to other young learners looking to enter the profession?

Be sure to get some work experience before you enrol on the course to make sure it's a job you really want to do. Making those connections in the industry is beneficial, especially if you want to find a mentor during the course that you can shadow in your spare time.

Also, the more reading you do, the better your knowledge will be. It sounds like an obvious bit of advice, but for many learners the textbooks were simply seen as reference materials. I made sure to read around the subject and get stuck into my textbooks, which was incredibly beneficial, especially as one of the younger, less experienced learners on the course.

All in all, as long as you go into the programme willing to learn and put in the effort, you can absolutely do it. I just wish I'd qualified before the summer so I could have had some time to enjoy the sunshine while job hunting!

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