

# AHK Graduate Programme Case Study: James Leyland

**Name:**

James Leyland

**Job Title:**

Graduate Chemist

**Qualification:**

Master of Chemistry (MChem)  
University of Sheffield

James began his AHK journey in March 2016 as part of the Graduate Programme. His primary role is focussed on projects that develop new analytical methods, implement improvements to existing ones, and analyse unusual or unfamiliar samples.

## James's AHK Journey

I would describe my journey at AHK as one of continual development; learning new skills and then putting them into practice. My Graduate development plan guided me through several of the laboratories and their procedures, laying the groundwork of my practical skills and introducing me to the world of analytical chemistry. Before long I began my first project; reinventing our approach to the analysis of nickel, and with its success, more projects continued to come my way. It is rewarding when you see your hard work in action, and know that you have brought about a positive change.

The impact of these changes are not necessarily limited to the actions of the UK laboratories, given AHK is a global company. This places you as part of a wide network, with opportunities for support and collaboration across the Group. As a result, a highlight of my AHK journey so far has been travelling to China to assist in the establishment of a new laboratory there. My recent opportunities closer to home have taken the form of online training focussed on statistics and data analysis; tools that can prove just as useful as a well-conducted experiment (as much as I sometimes don't like to admit). It is important to note that AHK is more than just its labs, the opportunities to build a career here extend well beyond them.

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## Advice to Graduates

Some graduates will know exactly what they want to do with their lives, which is great, but not everyone will. When I left University, my career plan was essentially 'probably some kind of science' and then after a year working as a marine biologist abroad, it became 'actually some kind of chemistry'. So my advice would be to think about your interests and any life goals, if you know them, and make informed decisions that will give you the best chance of moving closer to them.

As part of the graduate programme you will no doubt be exposed to a lot, some of which you might not have known existed or that it could be an appealing prospect for you until you encounter it, but having an idea is a great start. Gaining a broad knowledge of the company will be incredibly useful to you in your career here, but if at the same time you can also create your own niche, that's what will help you stand out.

