

Returners: A Diverse and Skilled Solution to Nuclear Skills Growth



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD

Proudly supporting those who serve.

STEM RETURNERS: BREAKING BARRIERS

We're on a mission to make it easier for highly qualified STEM professionals to return to work or career switch, creating the fairer, more diverse industry we all deserve.

Today, most STEM professionals get overlooked when attempting to return from a career break, contributing to a concerning lack of diversity in STEM organisations. This is what we're here to change.

“

I never felt unemployed until I started to try and return to work - after choosing to take a year off after redundancy.

STEM Returner

Our story

STEM Returners was founded in 2017 in response to a growing skills gap in UK STEM industries. We discovered a recruitment system that is broken, contributing to a shocking lack of diversity in STEM organisations.

A broken recruitment system

Highly skilled STEM professionals get overlooked when attempting to return from a career break, struggling to make progress via traditional recruitment channels. Why? Unconscious bias at the shortlisting stage, hiring pressures leading to assumptions made on limited information, and the common misconception that a 'CV gap' equates to a deterioration of skills. These hidden barriers mean talented professionals are being left behind, and this needs to change.

A shocking lack of diversity in STEM

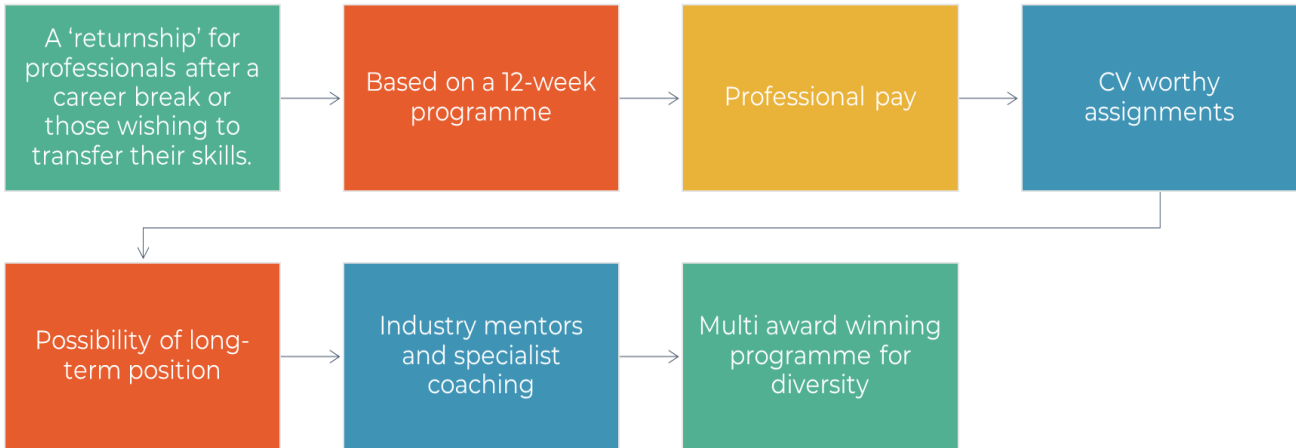
**89% male
91% white**

The current UK engineering workforce is 89% male and 91% white, yet few engineering companies are taking meaningful steps to attract minority ethnic groups or address the gender imbalance in their organisation.

In a market suffering from a desperate skills shortage this problem is magnified. The skills gap is growing, and the UK needs a diverse, agile and innovative STEM workforce more than ever.



THE STEM RETURNERS PROGRAMME



590

In total the STEM Returners programme has returned 590 STEM professionals, 129 into the nuclear sector.

96%
have secured a permanent position within their host organisation

46%
of STEM Returners are women vs 10.9% of professional engineers

34%
are from minority ethnic groups vs 9% of engineers

100%
of companies who have taken part have recruited Returners



UNLOCK HIDDEN TALENT IN NUCLEAR



To meet the growing demand from the expanding nuclear programme and to replace people who exit the sector, **40,000** new jobs will need to be filled by **2030**.
(source: National Nuclear Strategic Plan for Skills)

Returners: the often forgotten talent

The Government Equality Hub estimates there are currently **75,000** highly skilled STEM professionals who are ready to re-enter the workforce. (source: Gov.uk)

Returning individuals are experienced and highly qualified, with **75%** holding a degree, master's, or doctorate. (source: The STEM Returners Index 2024)

60% of returners had more than 5 years of experience in their field before their break, with 38% having over a decade of experience. These statistics demonstrate that those returning to work possess the knowledge and skills to make an immediate impact upon re-entry. (source: The STEM Returners Index 2024)

STEM Returners: our impact in nuclear



22% of UK nuclear sector jobs are held by women
yet **46% of STEM returners are women.**



129 skilled professionals have **successfully returned to careers in the nuclear industry** through STEM Returners programmes.



96% of returners who complete a STEM Returners programme **secure permanent roles**, demonstrating the success of our return-to-work model.

STEM RETURNER PROGRAMMES IN NUCLEAR

AW/E NUCLEAR SECURITY
TECHNOLOGIES



BAE SYSTEMS



UK Atomic
Energy
Authority

cavendishTM
nuclear
part of Babcock International Group

 **cyclife** aquila nuclear
edf GROUP

babcockTM

 **amentum**

STEM RETURNERS PROGRAMMES IN NUCLEAR



"We are proud to be the first nuclear engineering company to be supporting this fantastic programme.

"These placements provide a valuable opportunity and route for talented people, who may previously have encountered difficulties coming back to work, to restart their career or transfer their skills into a new industry."



"In our ongoing search for a talented and diverse workforce we are delighted to be able to work with STEM Returners' who provide access to a rich vein of fantastic candidates that would otherwise have been invisible to us."



"At Aquila Nuclear Engineering, we strive to break down barriers and build an inclusive and diverse workforce. We support those who have taken a career break and aim to get them back into their chosen profession."



"STEM Returners offers an excellent way for us to broaden the access into the fantastic opportunities that fusion has to offer, especially to individuals who are seeking an exciting and fresh challenge. We are delighted to launch this scheme at UKAEA and are looking forward to seeing it develop in the next few years."

RETURNED TO NUCLEAR



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Returning to a technical role after my career break was challenging. The STEM Returners Programme was the ideal way for me to re-enter the workforce, as it provided an opportunity to refresh my skills and develop new ones to bridge my career gap.

Renu
Mechanical Design Engineer
Cyclife Aquila Nuclear

“

I was offered a permanent contract at the end of my STEM Returners programme and haven't looked back. I keep learning and gaining experience every day while building networks and strengthening relationships. The flexibility offered means that I have the scope to explore new areas and get involved with projects that interest me, allowing me to use and showcase existing skills while gaining new ones. It's a role with the potential to keep evolving and challenging me and I feel optimistic about the future.

Claire
Project Engineer
Amentum UK

“

This opportunity has reinvigorated my career, providing me with the chance to work on a major project that will have a lasting impact. This role has been an incredible opportunity for me to apply my expertise while working on the Hinkley Point C nuclear project, which will power 6 million homes in the UK. The experience has been both professionally and personally fulfilling.

Osi
Project Quality Engineer
EDF Energy

STEM Returners

Registered office:

**7 Manor Court
Barnes Wallis Road
Segensworth,
Fareham, PO15 5TH**

stemreturners.com