

# BACB

## BACB & APPRENTICESHIPS

*In conversation with....Sharan Phull*

Following a successful apprenticeship in risk and compliance at BACB, Sharan Phull has recently been appointed as a permanent employee at the Bank. Having joined BACB straight out of school, she shares her experiences as an apprentice at the Bank, and as a promising new starter in the business.

*Q  
Congratulations on your recent appointment, Sharan.*

*Can you tell us a bit about your experience at BACB and what attracted you to this apprenticeship in particular?*

*“ Aside from getting the opportunity to work in London, one of the world’s leading financial markets, BACB’s apprenticeship programme stood out to me in its rather unique focus on risk and compliance. When I was researching potential positions, I came across a number of opportunities in classic areas such as finance, but apprenticeships in risk and compliance were more uncommon.*

*I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do as a career, but I knew that I wasn’t as keen on doing a standard business and finance placement. So, when I read the job description for this role at BACB, the specialism appealed to me.*

*I certainly felt the benefits of being in a smaller bank environment, in that I was able to gain all-round experience across a variety of sectors and in all of the bank’s activities; something I wouldn’t have been able to at a larger organisation.* ”



*“ I explained that apprenticeship programmes are a great alternative for students who don’t think university is the right route for them. ”*

Sharan Phull  
Operational Risk and  
Compliance Analyst,  
BACB



*Q. What challenges did you encounter in terms of adjusting to a working environment having come directly from school?*

A. Well, the first adjustment was settling in to a 9am to 5pm working environment, of course. But I think the biggest challenge for me – being so new to the world of work and endeavouring to gain as much experience as possible – was the fact that the majority of my apprenticeship had to be conducted remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In practice, this just meant I had to be more proactive in getting involved in different projects. For instance, in November 2020, I worked with the financial crime team for a while, which was a great experience during which I had the opportunity to work with new people and learnt a variety of new, transferrable skills.

Everyone at BACB was so welcoming that I quickly overcame any barriers introduced by the remote working situation. What’s more, the Bank holds plenty of “lunch and learns” which meant I got to know everyone well. I am really looking forward to a combination of in-office and remote working in due course, along with participating in the Together Volunteering Days which sees BACB partnering with charities to make a difference in less fortunate communities.

*Q. What were the most important things you learned during your apprenticeship?*

A. The importance of networking and getting to know people was hugely important, in my experience. In compliance, it is essential that you know all the areas of the business and the respective teams extremely well, as compliance should be at the heart of all banks’ operations.

Of course, good communication skills are key. Developing the confidence to communicate well with senior management is helpful given the need to interface regularly with individuals such as the Chief Compliance Officer.

Another attribute I have learnt is that some element of pressure is a good thing, and can provide momentum to grow professionally and to challenge yourself.

*Q. You went back to your old school to represent BACB at Careers Day. What was that like?*

A. We have an annual careers day at my previous school, in which businesses attend to speak to Year 9 pupils about potential career options. I opted to represent BACB with a stand – complete with pens, banners, booklets – and spoke to students who were interested in a career in banking.

It was certainly very well-received. Students were interested in the alternative route I had taken; many of whom were unaware that you don’t necessarily need a university degree to follow a career in banking.

I explained that apprenticeship programmes are a great alternative for students who don’t think university is the right route for them. It also has the added benefit of avoiding additional financial burdens, such as student debt. The talk really sparked the students’ interest – post event, one pupil even got in touch with the careers advisor to enquire about a banking apprenticeship.

*Q. What advice would you give to people looking to explore similar apprenticeship opportunities?*

**A.** I would advise to prepare thoroughly and do your research around the company and their values to ensure they are a good fit for you. It is also worth remembering that while apprenticeships are very competitive, it's not all about academia! Good communication skills, personability and a good work ethic will get you a long way.

*Q. What are you looking forward to most now about your new role?*

**A.** Being able to dedicate all my attention to the role, without the distraction and pressure of exams or assignments! I am also looking forward to getting more involved with cross team-based projects; hence, interacting with other colleagues. Most of my apprenticeship took place with the compliance team, but I plan to also increasingly focus on risk going forwards.

I'm really pleased starting in the role having already met everyone at the Bank – I know that if I need help in anything, my colleagues will always be supportive and helpful, for which I am grateful.

*“ At BACB, we aim to recruit and train the most talented people, while also enabling young people to get valuable, practical experience in the banking sector. Sharan’s enthusiasm and desire to learn shone through throughout her apprenticeship and we are delighted that she has decided to join us on a permanent basis. We look forward to welcoming similarly driven and talented people to join BACB in the future. ”*

Chris Dunford,  
Chief People Officer,  
BACB

*“ Operational risk and compliance is a route less trodden by young professionals starting out in the industry, but is absolutely critical to the banking sector and continues to grow in importance. Educating the next generation of specialists in this area should be a top priority within every organisation. Indeed, Sharan’s knowledge and skill set honed over her apprenticeship period will be invaluable now as a permanent colleague. She is a credit to BACB. ”*

Ross McNay,  
Head of Operational Risk and Compliance,  
BACB

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