

I Am a Volunteer and I Do...

Alex Catley



What activities have you undertaken as part of your volunteering?

My volunteering journey started as a STEM ambassador. It was a great way for me to get involved with the volunteering community and inspire the next generation of engineers and advertise the opportunities available, whilst challenging the views of what it is to be a professional engineer.

After obtaining my professional registration I took the next step in my volunteering journey and became a professional registration assessor with the IET.

After volunteering for several years with the IET, I then decided to become a professional registration assessor for INCOSE UK, it is my role to review professional registration applications and make a recommendation as to whether the requirements for registration have been met.

What originally inspired you to volunteer for INCOSE UK?

I decided to become a professional registration assessor for INCOSE UK as I wanted to give more to the organisation which champions my engineering specialism. I hope that my experience of assessing for a larger and more broad engineering institution can be useful.

My initial reason for volunteering was to provide some variation in my day job and be involved in something that I felt passionate about, enabling me to explore different opportunities within the engineering community.

I also feel it is allowing me to show some appreciation to the volunteers that have helped me throughout my career so far and ensure the same opportunities are available for others.

What do you feel you get out of your volunteering?

Being a professional registration assessor gives exposure to how Systems Engineering is being applied in the UK, not only in different sectors to which I work but also at different levels.

I believe it is a great way to better appreciate the bigger picture and challenges in engineering that you rarely see in the day-to-day work environment and perhaps obtaining inspiration for solutions to be applied in your work. This is backed up by INCOSE UK forming a joint registration board with the Institute of Explosives Engineers, opening a whole new community to collaborate and learn from.

I have also found it a useful forum to challenge and broaden my view on what is Systems Engineering, not only through reviewing applications but also through discussion with the other assessors. Being able to have those conversations within your peer group, I see, as only a good thing for the profession.

Do you have any advice or feedback to offer anyone who is considering volunteering?

Volunteering is a great way to 'do something out of the ordinary' and all contributions are certainly well received.

Generally, I think volunteers possess the same character traits, one being saying 'yes', as you are wanting to be doing something that interests you and is beneficial to others, however being mindful of when to say no is also key to ensure maximum benefit to all stakeholders.

I also see it as a great way to progress your career, providing the opportunity to engage with people that you normally wouldn't, building lasting connections, and you never know someone may already have the answer to your latest problem!