

## Q & A with global mining and metals company, South32

Featuring Graham Kerr, South32 CEO and ECU Alumnus



On Wednesday 7 July in the inaugural Extraordinary Minds in Extraordinary Times webinar, Graham Kerr, Chief Executive Officer of global mining and metals company South32 and ECU alumnus, and Lincoln Cox, South32 Group Manager for Culture & Capability shared incredible insights about their industry. They discussed the challenges, the opportunities and most importantly, how students and recent graduates can best navigate and position themselves in the new employment landscape.

South32 kindly responded to questions we didn't get time to answer during the event.

**How much have you used all the calculations and formulations you studied? How do you do all those tasks?**

Very little. Depending upon the type of role – Reliability & Maintenance Engineering vs Engineering Governance vs Project Engineering vs Design Engineering the use of calculations (first principles) - the need varies significantly. Even in the design roles the majority is now completed using well developed software applications. It is still important that any Engineer understands the theory behind these, however the ability to undertake them manually is not an expectation in industry (only high level/basic engineering calculations). Engineering is an applied science as opposed to a purely theoretical science, it is important that upcoming engineers are able to understand this concept clearly and what it means in reality. I don't believe this is articulated particularly well at universities and many engineers struggle with the transition to the workforce.

**For engineering students (both local and international) that are in their 1st and 2nd year, what realistic part-time jobs are strategic to be appealing to employers?**

Any roles that can relate to your field of study are a good starting point, where you are given tasks to develop your studies. Alternatively, we like to see students in part time roles that increase their emotional intelligence such as teamwork, customer service etc.

**How do I start career as a young female chemical engineer graduate?**

Start to research the companies in Australia that align to this discipline and that have diversity as a key enabler. Working in diverse organisations will assist you in your career development. See if they have a vacation or graduate program and get in touch with your careers advisor at uni who can put you in touch with someone from their HR/Talent team. Attending career fairs that are held at key times in the market (March) and then June/July/August is a great way to get in front of the recruiters to talk to them more about the opportunities available. Networking will help you stand out.

**What is your talent acquisition strategy on finding, attracting and hiring top talents to get growth and be competitive?**

- **Finding:** We go to market early March with a recruitment campaign to advertise our graduate/vacation roles.
- **Attracting:** Access to coaches and mentors, graduate buddies and senior leaders. Annual networking and development event in your first and second year to network and collaborate with other South32 graduates. An opportunity to work on a group project on improvement initiatives with genuine business impact. Rotations to increase your exposure and experience. Support to help you obtain full membership status with professional bodies. Access to tools such as LinkedIn Learning, Gemba Academy and company study schemes to help you grow. Competitive reward and benefits.
- **Hiring:** Candidates apply via SuccessFactors. They are then screened by the recruiter on work rights, grading, work experience, discipline, location and then shortlisted. They will then complete psychometric testing via Revellian. If scored well, the shortlist will then go through to the Hiring Manager for review. Interview. Pre employment checks. Offer. Onboarding.

**What sort of responsibilities do electrical engineers have in mining industry?**

Many! Engineers can be involved in the design (system requirements, concept, preliminary and detailed design), procurement, construction and commissioning of new assets. They would also be required to develop maintenance strategies, identify critical spares and preservation strategies. Defect elimination – conduct Root Cause Analysis to prevent recurring failures and implement improvement initiatives. Outside of this it is expected that Engineers make a significant contribution to the safety of our people and should be taking a lead in the removal of causes for our hazards & risks for our personnel. Sustainability – this is a topic that is going to become much more important in the future.

**People often reference the 'hidden job market' when talking about Perth/WA, is this an issue that graduates should be concerned with, or is the problem generally overblown?**

With regards to South32, no. All roles are advertised with headcount and disciplines decided ahead of time before the recruitment campaigns go to market.

**What are the tips to develop leadership and networking skills during your education or after starting your job at an initial level?**

During university, attend groups targeted at mining and your disciplines, attend career fairs, reach out to professionals on LinkedIn. Look at networking events that come up related to your area. When in your new role, speak to your coaches and mentors to get an idea of what networks they could put you in touch with.

**What questions are likely to be asked during an interview and how do I give effective answers?**

There will be a range of technical questions and behavioural questions based on South32 values. Make sure you do your research on which location you are being interviewed for and what commodity is mined. Research the STAR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Response). Be yourself - it's ok to be nervous, and present yourself professionally.

**Would you favour a fresh from uni candidate or someone who worked in a smaller company before?**

It depends on many aspects when interviewing a potential graduate and how they present themselves in interview. When looking to employ graduates or vacationers, they will need less than two years work experience in their discipline, so this is taken into account.