My fall co-op term was spent in the engineering department of Noble Automotive, a small British sports car company. Noble is a very small company, just 15 people in total, two of whom form the engineering department. This means that nearly everyone has a hand in just about everything. The projects I worked on ranged from designing a car key to organizing the computer networking for a new factory to evaluating and redesigning an oil tank for a dry sump oil system. Working for such a small company also meant that there was no official training or orientation, just my first day on the job. It has the advantage, however, of meaning that whenever you have a problem, you know exactly who to ask for help.

Because the team was so small, my work covered a broad range of tasks, some of which were within my educational background, but many of which were not. This was, frankly, the best possible situation, forcing me to deal with problems far outside of what is covered in any classroom. The combination of the small size of the company and the fact that Noble was entering into a serious crunch time with the impending launch of a new car when I arrived meant that pretty much every task that anyone was working on was high priority. This meant that making sure you had everything done ahead of the deadline was important, as a delay on any project could hold up any number of other ones.

Living in England added an additional layer of complexity to work. To begin with, everything is more expensive, from housing to food to entertainment. There are plenty of good housing options available, from city apartments to small country cottages, all within easy commuting distance. The public transportation system is fairly robust, but when living outside of a major metropolitan area, having a car makes it much easier to get where you want to go. The main hazard of having a car is that gas is very expensive in England. It is a great place to be for entertainment, as nothing is ever that far away. Additionally, there is always something to go see; with a history stretching back so far, there is always something interesting within easy reach.

Although my time at Noble was very busy indeed, it was a very good experience. I worked with a group of skilled coworkers on interesting projects in an entirely new environment. The only downside was that it really was crunch time, and the hours could sometimes get overwhelming. All told though, a great experience.