

Code First Girls

Code First Girls is an organisation that helps women transition into tech roles by introducing them into programming and networking them with tech companies. Their mission is to close the gender gap in the technology industry, based on the belief that women are just as capable as men but lack the support to break into these fields.

They have a wide range of courses available; Career Switcher courses for women working in different industries but looking to transition into tech, Uni-KickStarter courses for women just leaving university, and MOOCs (massive open online courses) which are free courses that provide insight into programming languages and applications.

When the course is complete, you become part of the Code First Girls Alumni. This allows you to connect with other graduates of CFG courses, attend future seminars and speeches hosted by CFG and grants you the opportunity to become a CFG Instructor and lead programming courses.

The Course

The course I undertook was the Career Switcher course 'Introduction to Data & SQL'. It was conducted every Thursday evening between September and October for 8 weeks. Each session lasted 2 hours and homework was set after each session.

Modules Included SQL Coding, Database Management, Database analysis, Data visualisation, there was also a final project presentation.

Some of the key concepts taught were how to backup and restore a Database on a Server, Normalisation, Constraints on Tables, Sub Queries, In-built functions, transactions (how to commit and roll them back), Virtual Tables, Stored Functions and Procedures, Events and Triggers.

For the final project, we were tasked with building a database with multiple tables containing various column types, Inserting data into these tables and then connecting them through the use of Primary and Foreign Keys. We were then tasked with using what we learnt to return and update the data within our tables, and present this to other members in our group.

To keep the project interesting and light hearted, I chose one of my childhood pastimes – Pokémon – to base my project on. It was received well and passed the project requirements. In return, I received a certificate proving my completion of the course.

My Experience

I was able to grasp many of the SQL concepts explained throughout the course easily. This was due to my exposure to these concepts in my work as a configurator.

For example, the idea of foreign keys in child tables linking to primary keys in parent tables

was easy to understand due to my understanding of Lookups in CoreStream's vNext Platform. When our instructor described the importance of ERDMs (Entity Relationship Diagram Mode) to outline the connections between different tables, I immediately understood its purpose because we use schemas to describe the relationship between collections in our HLDs.

Joins were also straightforward to understand as we use these frequently when setting data in CoreStream sites. I really think it is a testament to the efficacy of CoreStream configuration that we learn quite a bit of SQL without knowing it!

However, there were new things I learnt in the course such as sub queries, stored functions and stored procedures. I learnt how to import data into python and then use the functions in python to better interrogate data, and as exposed to new data visualisation techniques by importing my data into Tableau and learning how that platform is used to display charts and KPIs.

Final Thoughts

The course has been really helpful in teaching me new concepts around SQL and database management. It has also built my confidence in pursuing a more SQL focused role and confirming that the skills and concepts I've learnt at CoreStream are applicable across various settings.

I think any woman who joins CoreStream without a background in SQL would benefit from this course. Upon completion, they should be able to approach External Data to Sets and Chart Queries with confidence, and would not have to learn so much through trial and error or by help from colleagues.

I am grateful to CoreStream for sponsoring my place on this course and supporting my career goals. In doing so, it demonstrates that this is an organisation which really believes in diversity and equality in the workplace. This has already been evidenced by their review of the CoreStream Equal Opportunities policy in light of the BLM protest (which I appreciated), training opportunities in diversity and support for charities that help break down gender stereotypes.