



Sarah
Air Quality Manager,
DEFRA

How I got here

After taking A Levels in geography, English and French I read geography at Cambridge. I was really keen to continue working on social and environmental issues after university and I thought I'd be interested in working in the Civil Service, possibly DEFRA (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) or the Department for International Development. I was advised by the university careers service that the Civil Service valued private sector experience so I went into strategy consultancy. I found this intellectually challenging and enjoyable but I missed the geographical subject matter especially the social and environmental issues so I applied to the Civil Service. I was accepted for the fast stream, which is the graduate scheme for the Civil Service. I'm currently working for DEFRA and I really enjoy both the content and diversity of the work – I could be working on climate change one year then flooding or organic farming the next.

What my job entails

I lead a team that deals with improving air quality in the UK and we are supported by team of scientists. As part of my job, I have to understand quite a lot of science with regard to how air pollution works, so my geography background is very useful here. My work varies from day to day; it can involve trying to lobby people in the Department of Transport for what they can do to improve air quality, speaking with people in the EU about EU initiatives for tackling air pollution and liaising with other government departments, such as the Department of Trade and Industry, about what we can do to make industry more environmentally friendly.

How I use my geographical skills

Personally I think geography is one of the most employable of degrees. You can talk about everything that employers should want. I have found that employers in both the public and private sector have really valued my skills in both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Geography has provided me with a broad understanding of both science and economics which really helped me to secure the job I'm in now.



What I love about geography

I love geography because it is so relevant to today.

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