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My job involves:

I am responsible for the management and running of the timetable, room booking and attendance monitoring for the University of Sheffield School of Law. It is a large department, with a lot of staff and programmes, which means that the elaboration, implementation and maintenance of the timetable is a complex and year-round task.

With the application a few years ago of new national rules concerning International students and visas, attendance monitoring has become a very serious endeavour that Universities across the UK have taken in their stride. Since then I have been responsible for the collection of attendance data and ensuring that it is correct. This involves making sure that students are informed and supported. To achieve this I have in particular worked closely with welfare officers in the School and the University.

How did you find this job?

After graduating, I tried to start a career in academia and applied for jobs around the UK. I got to the interviews stages several times but the competition was very strong and the pool of jobs very limited. After a year, I took a temporary part-time job at the Sheffield School of Law to cover basic administrative tasks for a semester, and then applied to an internal job offer for timetabling and discipline officer. I also was Postgraduate Application officer for a while to cover a maternity leave. I built up my role progressively.

How (if at all!) does your PhD help you in your current work?

My PhD at Warwick prepared me in many ways for the job. The fact that it was an administrative job in a Higher Education environment helped, since I already understood the work environment and its challenges. More specifically, The PhD taught me rigour, planning, and analysing skills I didn't think I had. I also realised that I could learn and adapt fast and find solutions in times of crisis, and I am convinced that this is in part thanks to the skills you build in order to successfully complete a research degree.

What employment-related advice do you have for current PhDs?

That is a more difficult one. The main one is to show confidence. It's easy to dismiss PhD as being a luxury or an indulgence, because in the end you spend 3 to 4 years working on something you love and that has no bearing on the 'real world'. But that's not true. The skills and knowledge we obtain are real and are recognised, but we have to demonstrate that we have them. Also, and as soon as you can in the course of your PhD, have an honest look at your weak points and work on them. And constantly seek advice, from your supervisor, from other staff in your department, from basically anyone you meet in conferences and research events. You will meet a lot of important and interesting people whom you won't necessarily have a chance to talk to later on, so use every opportunity you can.