

N. PhD Physics & Astronomy, 2010

UCL Faculty:

- Mathematical & Physical Sciences

Current Role:

- Science Communication Officer and Soft Skills Trainer

Previous Role:

- Communications Intern

Sector:

- Higher Education

C.'s PhD research examined stochastic population dynamics in astrochemistry and aerosol science. C. is now a Science Communication Officer at a Viennese university. C. is also the coordinator and Soft Skills Trainer for a Doctoral Training Centre as part of a joint initiative between several Austrian universities. This involves organising a range of projects, content development, training for scientists, collaboration with other research institutes, arts festivals, museums, as well as individual and group mentoring.

Since graduating C. has been motivated to work in the Higher Education sector. In her current role she stays updated on advances in research, contributes to the education of young scientists and makes research accessible to a wider audience with a multi-faceted approach. C. believes her PhD expertise is essential in her work as a Science Communication Officer and gives her credibility with key stakeholders. Her PhD developed other transferable skills that are now essential, such as project management, communication skills and team management. Factors which enhanced these skills include her voluntary work, work placements and presenting at conferences, but C. feels that she was only able to hone her skill set because of the support and encouragement of her supervisor and department.

When putting herself forward for jobs, C. felt confident that she had benefited from the work placements she had secured and learned from during her time as a student; she highlights her work with the Science Media Centre, Cambridge University Press, and her contributions to UCL activities such as the organisation of student seminars.

C. believes that science communications in Austria is not a very well established career option. So after securing her role, she felt she had to convince people that the nature of her work would indeed make a valuable contribution. She secured her position through a range of job hunting methods that include searching for adverts on online job sites, sending speculative applications, tapping into her personal network of contacts, attending formal networking events and recruitment fairs.

During her time at UCL, C. took part in one to one career discussions with a UCL Careers Advisor, which gave her more confidence and greater awareness of the cultural differences concerning job application procedures in the UK. C. believes that she widened her perspective when she engaged in the opportunities offered by the UCL Graduate School, like the joint UCL and London Business School Enterprise Summer Bootcamp, the UCL Workshop on Research for Policy Makers and the UCL Research Communication Workshop.

When it comes to advice for current PhDs about to enter the academic or non-academic jobs market, C. suggests that it depends on the country and the PhD's specific background but she does recommend being flexible in terms of geographical location and sector. If you are considering the prospect of a PhD, and you have a deep enough interest in your project, if you are passionate about the proposed research and can survive the financial burden over 3 to 4 years, C. encourages you to 'definitely go for it'. She adds that she 'absolutely loved (her) time as a PhD student at UCL.'

Tags: Mathematical & Physical Sciences, Higher Education, Communication, Management, Policy, Academic