

Richard Watson, Correspondent, BBC Newsnight



Course of study	MSc Hydrogeology
Year of graduation	1985
City / Region / Country	London

1. Tell us more about your job; an example of day-to-day work, average week, or a recent project (or how would you describe your job to a friend?).

I'm an investigative journalist working in television. My latest investigative film for Newsnight is [available on YouTube](#).

2. What attributes make someone successful in this job (or what skills are involved in your current role)?

Curiosity; perseverance; determination; broadcasting skills - in that order.

3. What do you like most about your job?

Creative freedom; the opportunity to pursue 'social justice', public interest journalism.

4. What are the most challenging aspects (role or sector)?

Evidence gathering; legal and ethical challenges; getting the funding and backing for big investigations because they're expensive.

5. How did your degree prepare you for your current role (or are there any skills/knowledge you developed which you are using now)?

Going from hydrogeology to journalism could be considered left field but there are cross overs in terms of gathering and assessing evidence, attention to detail etc. Any degree or postgrad is helpful because evidence-based, critical thinking lies at the heart of public interest journalism.

6. How did you get to where you are now in your career (or what experiences helped you)?

I made the transition from geology to journalism by starting my career reporting for small scientific and engineering magazines and then building from there. My career history is on [LinkedIn](#).

7. What advice would you give to current students about getting into / starting out in your sector? (e.g. relevant experiences, supportive people, necessary education)

Journalism - especially investigative journalism - is a calling. Be idealistic. Develop passions. Want to change your world, but be open-minded about stories. Treat contributors with absolute care and respect. Protect confidential sources at all costs. Be honest about assessing 'negative evidence' - evidence which detracts from your hypothesis.

8. What is on the horizon within your industry that our students should know about? (positives or negatives)

With the rise of social media, it's even more vital to be distinctive: everyone thinks they're a journalist now. But arguably, the work of a professional journalist - a sifter of new information, a chronicler of stories - has never been more important.

9. If you could give a current student one piece of advice on something you wish you'd have known prior to starting your career what would it be?

You make your own luck.

Any final comments to current students.

Stories, stories, stories...you need to develop a sixth sense for story; what's new, what's important; how to tell them...