

F. - PhD Molecular Genetics, Institute of Ophthalmology, 2010

UCL Faculty:

■ Brain Sciences

Current Role:

■ Senior Research Scientist- Project Leader

Previous Role:

■ Research Scientist

Sector:

■ Bio-Pharma

F. is a Senior Research Scientist and Project Leader at a biotechnology company located in Cambridgeshire, England. The organisation supports other biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies that are developing novel biologics and diagnostics products. After completing her doctorate, prior to her current role, F. was a Research Scientist at the same company. F's career choices have been motivated by her preference for applying her research skills in an industrial environment, as she believes that her scientific projects are 'more focused, short-term and have more definite goals' than they might be in an academic setting.

In F's view, her PhD expertise is essential for her role, and having a PhD gives her credibility with key stakeholders. As for her career progression, F. believes that having a PhD is essential. However F. feels that her PhD training did not develop all of the non-technical, transferable skills she has used in her roles after graduating. During her PhD F. was 'not exposed to clients', and she did not have to manage or supervise people so she feels she had to develop her management and communication skills and experience when she entered the post-PhD phase of her career. In her current position F. uses a range of transferable skills, which include management, supervising people, team working, liaising with clients and preparing reports for clients.

Regarding the challenges of succeeding in the employment market, F. feels that the particular obstacles she had to face were her 'lack of experience in industry', and the strong competition 'due to credit-crunch related redundancies'. Since completing her doctorate, F. has secured her positions by searching for adverts on online job sites, in industry/sector-specific publications and by looking for advertised positions on company websites.

As a student at UCL, F. made use of the Careers Service by having one-to-one discussions with a careers adviser and taking part in PhD-specific employer careers events and forums. She believes that accessing this support helped her to create a more effective and efficient CV, and that it enabled her to understand and communicate her transferable skills clearly.

Given the 'many difficulties' F. feels that she had in discovering which roles (she) could apply for, her advice to PhD students who will soon enter the jobs market is to 'speak to people with different experiences' so that you develop ideas about available, relevant and interesting opportunities. F. also draws attention to the breadth of opportunities open to PhD graduates, which, as she recalls, was not always part of her perceptions or perhaps of those of the wider academic community. Reflecting on her career to date, F.'s advice to those considering doing a PhD is encouraging. While you have the commitment and resilience to 'stick to it for three years, in good times and bad', F. urges you to pursue a PhD 'because it opens your mind, not just your career path.'

Tags:

■ Brain Sciences, Bio-Pharma, Researcher, Managerial, Non-Academic