



STS Careers Podcast – Operations Admin Malcolm Chalmers talks to Industry Programme Officer at The Royal Society, and former BSc Science and Society student, Camilla Tetley

Camilla graduated from the BSc in Science and Society in 2016. This podcast was recorded in 2017. At the time of uploading this transcript (Oct 2018) she is still at The Royal Society.

MC Welcome to another STS podcast. My name is Malcolm Chalmers, I'm the operations administrator for the department, and I'm speaking with former BSc Science and Society student Camilla Tetley. Camilla, hello!

CT Hello! Thanks for having me.

MC Not at all, thanks for coming. So, I wanted to talk to you a little bit about your work after doing the course with us. So you graduated in 2016?

CT Yep, that's right.

MC Grand, so you've been out of the course now for just over a year, and first of all you went to work for an organisation called Cause 4, I believe?

CT Yes that's right. Basically I was kind of very unsure about what to do in the next step, and I was just looking around at what UCL had to offer in terms of careers, and helping you, y'know, get onto that next step. I kind of just signed up for their updates and was just looking at anything they sent really. I was looking more towards the charity side of things, and the third sector basically, or government. So I got an email from them with an update for an internship at Cause 4. It's a charitable organisation, so it does support for charities, things like fundraising, building cases for support, and that kind of thing – more towards the arts. I thought "that looks interesting, I'll just go ahead and do that and see what happens". You know, you kind of have to apply for many things before you get something, so I was just going for it really, as you do, and as you must. Then I got an internship there, and that turned into a year. I knew it wasn't something I would want to do long term, but it was just kind of something to give me more experience.

MC Fantastic. And then after completing that you've now moved on to a job at the Royal Society?

CT Yeah that's right.

MC Where...what was your particular post again?

CT It's the industry programme officer.

MC Which you were saying earlier is not a position that a lot of other organisations would necessarily have?

CT That's right – the Royal Society has a lot of that going on, a lot of things that other organisations don't really have, it's quite unique. So it's a programme to support science in industry, because science – as you know – goes on a lot in academia, and at universities it's flagged up a lot more than science in industry. So the programme was formed to support science in industry, and to support people transitioning between academia and industry, and to create more recognition for people doing research in industry. Mostly the work is conferences that we organise around emerging technologies, and things like supporting entrepreneurship in science, things like summer students – we fund some summer placements in industry...

MC Are you able to give any examples of areas in industry where you've placed people?

CT So basically we fund the industry programme...one of our main areas of activity is funding people to do research. Either people who are in academia to do research within industry, or people in industry to do research with a university. So the summer

placements that we've funded are industry fellows – those are the people that we fund. They've come to us and said 'we want to have a summer student and be a mentor to them', and then students would apply to that industry fellow and it would happen that way.

MC Fantastic.

CT Yes.

MC So you were saying to me the way up here how it felt quite strange to be back in the department after only a year or so, but you've clearly manage to land on your feet quite well...

CT Surprisingly.

MC ... and then gone on from there. Looking back after a year away from the department, how much do you feel that your time at UCL, and your time at STS specifically, help prepare you for those kinds of roles?

CT It has helped me a lot, yes. I think I'll go back to STS in a second, but even my role at Cause4, it was so valuable because it was a really, really small company and you just got so much experience at once and so much goes wrong that it feels like this shouldn't be happening. But then when you go somewhere else, you really learn from those experiences and you are more prepared for things. So that helped me a lot in terms of just like professional skills and dealing with things on the job.

STS, yes, I wouldn't have gotten the role at the Royal Society without STS at all. It's such a unique degree and, of course, a lot of people do hard sciences and fundamental science which we need, obviously. But the degree really set me up because it's exactly what the Royal Society does, and what so many places look for is kind of the questions around the science and questions like ethical questions, should we be doing this and, to me, what feels more important questions to be asking.

So that was, obviously, what we do every day at UCL, it's discussion in ethics and science. I used to love the discussions that went on there because you'd get medics and people from physics and people from loads of different backgrounds. And then science communication, yes, I prefer talking about things that are happening now and things that are emerging now and the things we talked about and kind of the way we were taught to ask questions and really pick apart things and discuss and, yes, the angles that we should look at things from. In STS, that's usually valuable, yes.

MC So you mentioned earlier some of the modules that you have chosen and there was definitely a theme from the ones that you picked. They were a lot on science policy, environmental politics, nature, emerging technology. Looking back, you can see how those modules helped prepare you for the job that you have now. Going back before that, what was it that led you to choose those modules? What was it that led you to choose STS before?

CT Funny story.

MC Oh, I like that.

CT I actually chose to do liberal arts and sciences and I didn't know about STS at all. And then, someone from STS came to me and said, your interest might line up quite nicely with this degree. Would you consider doing this? And I thought that's very unique and also it's a BSc which looks really good. I just kind of went for it and I never thought that I would be doing anything science-y.

Before university, when I was in school and up until 18, I was more kind of languages, history, that kinds of things. Psychology, I loved. I did some psychology at UCL as well. So

I didn't see myself going into science, but it's kind of just how it happened. Going into STS, I became really interested in like reading the New Scientist, that there is so much else other than doing the actual science that there is that I didn't know about.

MC Definitely. I think it's one of the things that we talk about a lot in the department, that you can come and study chemistry, you can come and study biology and sit in a room and have experiments and read from textbooks, but there is so much around connected to it, whether it's science communication or ethics or emerging technology or science in the media or any of these other cases. Would you have any advice for... we're recording this at the beginning of September and a new cohort of students are due to come in any moment soon, would you have any advice for them on how to spend their three years?

CT Oh, gosh. How to spend your three years? You've got core modules that you have to take and you're going to have things that you enjoy less and things that you enjoy more. Probably, I'll just say give everything a chance. You're not going to enjoy everything to begin with and you're going to get used to everything and finding your way, but I would say definitely become involved with the department because it will be like your second home for three years. So definitely try and... don't tread on anyone's toes, don't make anyone angry.

But, yes, I would say enjoy your life. Don't kill yourself studying and not do anything apart from your core studies. Things like joining societies are hugely important. Things like that, but then obviously your first year, you're used to kind of find that you go by elimination sometimes unless you really know what you want to do from the go. You kind of go by elimination.

So, yes, probably more towards the second and third year, more commonly, I found that people really got stuck into what they were studying after you can choose what you want to do. I also did a couple of modules outside the department, which was a bit unique. I had to especially make applications to do that, so I did one in law and one in psychology. If there is something else you really want to try, go for it as well. But, yeah, get involved.

MC I think that is true. We do seem to have increasing numbers of students who will take one module or maybe two from other departments and it does seem to spread around quite easily. We also of course got a lot of students from other departments coming and doing some modules.

CT Yes, and that's really interesting because like I said in the discussion modules or in the seminars, it's really great to get such a different range of opinions about the same thing. Like medics, for example, would just comment things from a completely different angle.

I think the whole kind of the fact that STS is a bit smaller, there are so much more participation and so you get quite a lot more... yes, so I'd say involving yourself, you'll get a lot more out of the degree than someone probably in a massive economics lecture with like 1000 people will be getting.

MC You'll get much more in terms of smaller seminar groups, smaller tutorials and that kind of one-to-one reaction with people.

CT Yes.

MC I was going to ask you, we discussed briefly the modules that you'd taken here. Do you think there's any particular area of your STS study that has benefitted you in the work that you've gone into since? Would you be able to pinpoint one area that you think prepared you for the career that you've taken now?

CT I don't think I could choose one area but I think that's what's really valuable about it is that everything meshes together. Particularly, I do think governing emerging technologies and science communication were very valuable in terms of just science communication not

only what I learned from it, so we would have to go out and interview people and learn how to write, grabbing people's attention and news values and things like that.

But just being able to say, I've studied science communication, is really valuable for places like... if you want to go into where I am now or like the Wellcome Trust or anywhere really, even government and charities. You can use that anywhere. So I think the things that discussed more contemporary technological and scientific questions definitely set me up more. And also, ethics and science, things that teach you the fundamental theories about asking those questions.

MC Are there any particular skills that you think were developed? You mentioned having to write news pieces and interview people. Are there any that you find yourself using on a fairly regular basis at work that you think this came from my time in STS?

CT Yes, so sometimes I don't... I'm not involved in a lot of report writing at the Royal Society because that's more policy, but I have done a few workshops with them and having done things like... especially governing emerging technologies and just even things like nature and technology. Things that... essay writing in particular set me up quite well for some of the things I do now. So, kind of taking your ideas and forming them into... asking these questions that we ask in STS but forming them into something coherent and not just rambling questions that you know you probably can't answer that's been really useful because the whole point is to communicate science very succinctly into a wide range of audiences.

I think, I would say essay writing about contemporary or scientific matters was very valuable, not the only thing, there was a lot more. I think even my interpersonal skills were taught very well here because of the fact that it's smaller and things like time management, just the usual things that you pick up that you need but are more emphasized in STS because it's smaller and, yes, you get more out of it for sure.

MC You definitely do feel, I think, that the physical size of the department, the fact that everyone's in one building, the fact that you walk back and forth from the common room and you will pass three or four of your lecturers who will remind you of which essay is needed and will ask your opinion of things.

CT Yes.

MC It really does feel a bit like a family here. Everyone kind of knows each other quite well in that sense.

CT Definitely.

MC Grand. Is there anything else that comes to mind that you wanted to discuss?

CT Probably, the masters actually is something to talk about, although I'm not sure how much I can actually say because I haven't done one.

MC No?

CT But that's an interesting question. I've been considering...

MC Have you looked into coming in to do a master's in...

CT I mean, it does give you an edge definitely when so many people have it. I think doing it for the sake of doing it probably is not the way to go, but if there's something that you really want to dig deeper into. For example, in STS, I did think that if I did a master's, I would've been able to get into specific issues and pick things apart quite a lot more which if you have a very specific career path in line that you want to go down. So if you really want to get into environmental technology or something like that, then a masters would be great because you could do so much in detail in that area.

- MC Were there specific areas that you were interested in?
- CT No, this is my problem, just interested in so many things.
- MC Too wide of a range interest to narrow it down to one thing?
- CT It's true and that's why it's just as great because I could do a range of things.
- MC And I think that is again... that's the difference an undergrad and a post grad level. In undergrad, you really can involve yourself in such a wide range of different areas and different subjects, regardless of what course you do, but specifically within STS.
- CT Yes.
- MC Whereas once you get to the master's, the PhD level, it's much more about narrowly focusing on that one area that really grabs your attention.
- CT Yes, definitely.
- MC Brilliant. Well, that's been a fascinating conversation. Thanks very much for coming along, Camilla.
- CT Thanks very much.
- MC If you want more information, you can listen to some of our other podcast further down the page. Thanks for listening. Tune back in next time.

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