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I chose to study a science degree at University (BSc Chemistry and Molecular Physics) as I was interested in the application of mathematics in a scientific context however, as my studies progressed, I came to realise that my true passion was mathematics. After graduating, I moved from academia into my father's agricultural fencing business. My qualifications would often come into conversation and I found that any mention of mathematics was often met with a strong sense of antipathy due to either poor experiences in school or a perceived inability in the subject. It was precisely these attitudes that made me consider a career change to a previously contemplated profession: a mathematics teacher. However, following six years away from education, I felt I needed some additional subject knowledge beyond a one-year PGCE course. I considered a mathematics enhancement course but then discovered a much stronger option, the University of Birmingham's two-year PGCE conversion course, aimed at individuals with a less-mathematical degree than my own as well as those returning to education.

Although I primarily chose the two-year conversion course to improve my subject knowledge, its extra strengths quickly became apparent. My previous experience of mathematics education was limited to my memories of being a pupil; the course gave me the opportunity to be taught for a full year by three expert tutors, which exposed me to a variety of teaching styles and views on effective teaching. Time was also devoted to current educational research on mathematics education, which shaped my thoughts, and again, challenged my own beliefs on how mathematics should and could be taught. The extra four-week teaching placement in the first year was also an invaluable experience; stepping into the classroom as a teacher for the first time made me realise that I had made the correct career change and that my heart belonged to the teaching profession. I have no doubt that this extra exposure, knowledge and theory will result in me becoming a far better teacher.

I am now in the second year of my conversion course and am following largely the same path as those on the one-year mathematics PGCE. Whilst the one-year PGCE course is incredibly strong in its own right, I feel fortunate and privileged to have worked with the tutors for an additional year as it was a great experience and has definitely raised my second year performance. I am looking forward to entering my NQT year in September, which I hope is the beginning of a professional progression towards heading my own department. I considered the Masters level qualification an added bonus when I applied, however during my first year I became very interested in and respectful of the persuasive power of research into education. I hope to join the MEd course following my NQT year and continue academic research alongside my teaching. Although this may sound hyperbolic, the University of Birmingham's two-year PGCE course has changed my life and I will be forever indebted to the course tutors for the level of support they have provided.