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Catherine Brooks, Environmental Science

I have always been interested in people and the environment, so an Environmental Science degree seemed like the natural option for me, although I didn't have any idea about what career I wanted at the time. I visited Birmingham University one sunny afternoon when I was studying for my A-levels, and just loved the feel of the place.

The Environmental Science course gave me the opportunity to learn about a wide range of subjects, from science-based subjects to social science and economics. It also helped me develop a diverse set of research skills, such as practical fieldwork techniques, questionnaire design, and how to make presentations, which are extremely useful in the work place.

After meeting some fantastic people, going on some great fieldtrips (including stream sampling at ridiculous times in the night!) and a lot of hard work, I graduated from Birmingham with a 2:1, and was asked to consider applying for a PhD in the department. After much encouragement from the department and my passion for people and the environment I decided to focus the PhD on public participation in environmental decision making.

The PhD process gave me an invaluable insight into how research can contribute to real world issues, and helped me to realise and develop my people skills. After completing the PhD I worked for an environmental consultancy for a few years to widen my experience of environmental policy projects at the local, national and European level.

I am currently working for the Environment Agency as a Community Relations Manager, helping to support, advise and train staff to engage with local communities.

The course gave me a solid understanding of the scientific, social and economic aspect of environmental management, which has been invaluable in informing my day-to-day work. My university experience helped me to identify, develop and use my skills, and ultimately decide on the career path I wanted to pursue.

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