We use cookies to ensure that we deliver the best user experience of our website. If you would like to, you can change your cookie settings at any time. Continue

Charlotte Barnard

BA Sociology (2011)

> Sociology has developed my way of thinking. Before I used to look for answers that were matter of fact and obvious, but Sociology taught me to 'think outside the box' and explore my own logical interpretations and challenge others."

Who are you currently working for and what is your job title?

I'm working as Business Assistant to the CEO of Techlightenment, a social media company.

Why did you originally apply to Birmingham?

Birmingham attracted me as it was the perfect distance away from home, not too far and not too close. I also preferred it to any other university as everything was on one campus and the halls and student village Selly Oak were all within a good walking distance. I guess another reason was because I knew a few people from home going as well.

What are the main benefits of studying Sociology at Birmingham?

The staff are really friendly and the university itself is a great working environment. The library caters for the needs of its students with sufficient IT equipment and an array of books. Birmingham seems to be a great place to study in comparison to what I have heard about other universities.

Did you find the Sociology programme at Birmingham challenging or easy?

I guess it depends on the module. I personally found that the core Sociology modules MST and CST were the most complex and hardest to comprehend whereas others such as Migration were easier. Just because they were easier it doesn't mean that they were any less interesting but there were a lot of aspects of Migration that were common sense.

How does the study of sociology continue to impact on your life / experiences?

Sociology has developed my way of thinking. Before I used to look for answers that were matter of fact and obvious, but Sociology taught me to 'think outside the box' and explore my own logical interpretations and challenge others.

What advice would you give to current students studying sociology.

My first and most important piece of advice around module choices is, stick to modules related to Sociology. The modules I regretted taking the most were those from outside of the Sociology school. It is obviously interesting to learn things outside of your subject area but each school has its own set of rules for assignments and for me, it was hard to adjust my ways to accommodate those rules and therefore, I didn't do as well as I could have done.

In terms of accommodation, first years should definitely live on the Vale. I would say that Elgar and Mason are the best halls to live in, but I guess it depends on the people and not just the halls themselves.

Did you find the University or your degree helpful to you in getting your first job?

I'm sure if I had asked the Careers centre they would have been very helpful! I took a risk in not applying to graduate schemes or seeking job advice through the university. Luckily for me the social media company I work for was actually looking for Sociology graduates with a 2:1 or higher degree and during my interview I told them about my dissertation and why and how I researched my chosen topic and they really loved the fact that I was passionate about it and that I chose to do my dissertation titled "The Effects of Childhood Socialisation on Sexual Orientation" because my friend had recently come out as being gay.

What are your fondest memories of the University?

My fondest memories lie with the relationships I built with new friends and the maintenance of relationships with old friends. Honestly, I know everyone always says they made friends for life, and I know it's cringey but it's actually really true. Birmingham nightlife definitely played a major role in my happiness and fondest memories. Gatecrasher, Vodbull , Mechu, Rainbow and Custard Factory – I owe you!

Independence is another of my fondest memories of university, the first time you leave home and learn to cook and clean for yourself. It's been hard adjusting to moving back home but hopefully I'll be moving out again soon.

How did you grow as a person by coming to University?

I think it's a given that everyone matures over their time spent at university. Firstly, because you need to fend for yourself, budget your money and look after yourself by cooking the right meals and maintaining discipline when doing your work. Secondly, it has definitely made me more tolerant and understanding. Living with people and learning to tolerate their bad habits whilst they tolerate yours. Finally, it has definitely made me more confident. Although I knew a few people from home I still had to put myself out there and make other friends, not just from my halls but from my course as well. This new found confidence certainly contributed to getting me my job at Techlightenment.

What did you think of the learning experience within the University?

To be honest, Sociology didn't really prepare me for life in business as it's not really that sort of course. However, as a general rule I believe that university prepared me in terms of time management, working under pressure and working in teams.

How has your career developed since graduating from the University of Birmingham?

I am currently working as a Business Assistant to the CEO of a social media company called Techlightenment. My general day to day activities is shadowing the CEO, going to all his client meetings and learning about the business on a broad scale. Alongside this, I am his PA so I organise his diary and schedule meetings.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

The best aspects of my job are that I am learning about all different parts of the company such as, client services, insight, products etc. This allows me to test all the aspects of the business and discover what I enjoy the most. At the end of my first year I am meant to join one of the teams within the company and shadowing the CEO and Heads of teams allows me to discover the direction of my career path. Another great thing about the company is that it's an incredibly relaxed environment and all my colleagues are really friendly.

© University of Birmingham 2014