

A job in... The Civil Service Fast Stream

Gradline Editor Jane Westwell looks at one career option in the Civil Service for science graduates.

Q Why did you decide to leave bench science?

Although I enjoyed bench science, I didn't think I was particularly good at it! I felt my strengths lay in other areas so I decided to try my hand at something different.

Q What is the Civil Service Fast Stream?

It is a graduate entry programme which concentrates on developing the skills and experience needed for rapid advancement within the Civil Service. It provides exposure to a wide variety of jobs and roles in a relatively short period of time. Fast Streamers typically spend around 4 years taking on short (6–12 month) postings that offer challenging, high-profile work. A great deal is expected of Fast Streamers and they are often thrown in at the deep-end to work in important and exciting areas.

The Civil Service recruits around 200 graduates per year to the Fast Stream programme. A large proportion of successful candidates have postgraduate work experience or qualifications (a surprisingly large number of biology PhD students are on the scheme!), but it is not too uncommon for recent graduates to be selected.

Q Please describe a typical day

There are no typical days on the Fast Stream. The variety and scope of work means you never get bored. In my last post I was charged with helping to produce a report entitled *Bioscience 2015*. Days could vary: perhaps drafting sections of the report or running large brainstorming sessions. I also visited several biotechnology companies.

Q How do you see your future?

I'll probably remain on the Fast Stream for another 3–4 years. After this I hope to win promotion to full managerial level. Although I am currently working in the Women and Equality Unit of DTI my heart still lies with science. I'm sure that I'll be drawn back to work in areas of Government that influence science policy. I'd also like to experience life in the private sector so shall probably move out of Government at some point in the future. However, I don't think you can plan too far ahead, since you never know what opportunities lie round the corner.

Q What advice can you offer people planning to apply to the Fast Stream?

Go for it – definitely. I have enjoyed myself immensely. Being thrown in at the deep end allows you to develop in ways that you didn't think you could.

The selection process for the Fast Stream is pretty tough. If you get the opportunity, attending a GRADSschool provides experience similar to the assessment centre exercises. Also, emphasize your

Profile

Name Stuart Wainwright

Age 25

Present Occupation

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Women and Equality Unit

Previous Employment

DTI, Bioscience Unit
Numerous part-time summer jobs

Education

PhD, University of Sheffield, *Iron acquisition in the gastric pathogen Helicobacter pylori*

BSc, University of Sheffield, *Genetics*



background in science – the Civil Service really does value people with an analytical mind.

Further information

Civil Service Fast Stream (www.fastream.gov.uk) gives information about the opportunities available on the Fast Stream and outlines the application and selection process.

UK GRAD website (www.grad.ac.uk) provides information about the range of GRADSschools,

course dates and venues. The SGM offers grants to support GRADSschool attendance by Postgraduate Members who are not eligible to obtain sponsorship from their funding bodies. Information and application forms are available from www.sgm.ac.uk/grants/pf.cfm

Career Development Workshop – 1 April, University of Bath

Brush up your presentation skills and gather some useful tips on career planning at our evening workshop *PhD and Beyond* at the Spring meeting in Bath. The session will close with a buffet and drinks.

A CV clinic will be running during the preceding afternoon. More details will be provided when you register for the meeting.

For more information contact Jane Westwell (j.westwell@sgm.ac.uk).

Calling all food microbiology postgrads

Don't miss the opportunity to present your work to other postgrads and academics at The Royal Society of Chemistry Food Group Post-Graduate Meeting, 15–16 July 2004, at University of Reading.

The meeting is open to postgraduates in all disciplines of food science and the organizers would particularly like to encourage more microbiologists to attend this year. Whether your research lies in the area of food safety, production, molecular methods, food biotechnology or development you are welcome to register for the meeting and submit an abstract (closing date **7 May 2004**). Some delegates will have the chance to make oral presentations; others will present posters.

The meeting costs £20 including meals and accommodation for one night. You can even take your supervisor along for a mere £50. More details are available from Dr Bob Rastall (r.a.rastall@rdg.ac.uk).

If you have any stories or news for publication in Gradline, or if you would like to see any topics featured, contact Gradline Editor Jane Westwell (j.westwell@sgm.ac.uk).