Case Study

Chris Chirnside

STEM WORKS

Cogent skills
for science industries

Profile:

Age: 25

Location: Warrington

Company: Cavendish Nuclear

Job: Technical Specialist

My job – what I do

I'm currently in my third year of employment with Cavendish Nuclear, having spent two years as a **Graduate**, and now still effectively spending time on work that I wouldn't have imagined doing when I first started! Therefore it's difficult to describe what I do day to day, but I'm part of the Science and Hazard Management team which specialise in a long list of things including Radiation Protection, Safety Case, Waste Management and Decommissioning. There are always plenty of opportunities to get involved in a variation of work which is what I love, because it keeps me driven towards working hard to find even more opportunities for myself.

My qualifications

GCSE's, A-Levels in Maths, Physics, Music. AS-Level Spanish. **Master's Degree (MPhys) in Physics**.

How I got into science

I went to university to study Physics. As part of my course I worked through the summer in my second year (Manufacturing support placement) and through the summer in my third year (Academic research placement).

What I do on a typical day

I like to get to the office pretty early and generally set a to-do list for the day whilst the coffee is still brewing! Then when 9am comes I usually have a 1:1 meeting with my placement line manager, where we discuss progress on tasks and I receive feedback on different aspects of the way I work. Having a manager that does this is incredibly important for the speed of my development and is what I value most about the work I'm doing. Once a week I will attend the team brief where we receive information from various different people in the company, including the Executive Board. Taking these messages in keeps us in touch with everyone in the company. Then I generally get on with my tasks for the day. These vary hugely and often take me to different places around the country too!

The best 3 things about my job

1. The amount of activities I'm supported and encouraged to get involved in, whether that be representing the company at a conference, talking to young people about science or being given further training to take my career forward, the company really do support each employee fully.
2. Feeling like you've made an impact on the UK's Nuclear future. In 10 years' time I will get to see new power stations operating and say that I had a part to play in them getting built.
3. The opportunity to progress and not being restricted to one career path in the company. **The graduate scheme** has offered me lots of opportunities to work for different people and really understand how the business operates and how it would like to improve in the future.

My biggest science inspiration

Science is forever changing the way we live, and what we know. I think that comes down to newer and more interesting discoveries as well a changing view in the media. Science is now seen to be 'cool' as people learn more about it through TV shows like 'The Big Bang Theory' and through seeing TV personalities like Brian Cox and Sir David Attenborough. This helps by reducing the idea that you have to be really clever to be a scientist. Some jobs in science need really clever people, but there are jobs in science for anyone with who has energy and ambition.

The biggest inspiration for me was learning about the UK's energy crisis whilst I was at school, being told that we'd run out of fossil fuels in 40 years' time. Also hearing about the development of Nuclear Fusion (the process which fuels the Sun) being researched and replicated right here on Earth. I was inspired to learn more about it by studying Physics. I also got interested in Computing, Maths, **Astrophysics** and others.

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In the future

I like the idea of becoming a real technical expert for the company and being involved in big projects in the future. However, I also like the idea of managing people and bringing the best out of other staff. Hopefully I get an opportunity in the future to showcase my skills in these different areas and begin to hone them on further work.

Why should young people consider a career in science?

Young people should to consider a career in science because:

- Scientists have skills such problem solving, **logical thinking** and **analytical skills** which are the type of skills that employers want and need.
- By the time young people leave school and get a job in science (such as **Energy, Pharmaceuticals** and Research & Development) they will still be able to make new discoveries as things are changing all the time.
- The promise of thought-provoking work and a long and fulfilling career that can take you right round the world.

Jargon Buster

Graduate - A graduate is someone who has successfully completed a first degree at a university or college.

Master's Degree in Physics (MPhys) - A master's degree is a type of degree qualification. It can only be taken after completion of an undergraduate degree like a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc).

Graduate Scheme - structured programme for graduates offered by large companies. It combines working and training and can last for a period of 3 months to 3 years.

Astrophysics - Astrophysics is a branch of space science that applies the laws of physics and chemistry to seek to understand the universe and our place in it.

Logical thinking - Logical thinking uses the straight facts in order to solve problems.

Analytical Skills - Having good analytical skills means you're able to study, visualise and communicate information to solve uncomplicated and complicated problems, helping you make sensible decisions based on the information available.

Pharmaceuticals - Is the term used to describe the industry or parts of the industry which discovers, develops, evaluates, registers, monitors and markets medicines for the benefit of patients and the health of the community.

Energy - The Energy industry is the term we use to describe companies that produce, distribute and sell energy such as oil, gas and electric.

European Union
European Social Fund
Education & Skills Funding Agency
Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership
Cogent skills
for science industries
Cheshire East Council
Cheshire West and Chester
WARRINGTON Borough Council
BeInspired
www.cogentskills.com