



Competencies for Food Graduate Careers

Nutritionist

Name: Olivia Booker

Degree Course: BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Consumer Sciences

Place Studied: University of Reading

Date Graduated: July 2022

First Graduate Job: Nutritionist, Thomas Franks



When did you first become interested in Food Science?

I first became interested in Food Science and Nutrition when I was working as cabin crew for British Airways. Seeing mass catering for an airline, where food needed to be delivered, stored and safely prepared in the air in addition to being tailored to changes to taste in the cabin conditions was fascinating. With nutrition, I realised that shift work really impacted my own food choices and I became a lot more interested in the reasons why people eat the way they do and its impact on health.

What was Uni Study Like?

I actually decided to go to university later than the average applicant. I studied Maths and Psychology, which definitely helped me with my degree. What I loved about the course at Reading University was the diversity of the course. There was a real mix of nutrition for health, understanding food from farm to fork, food sensory and marketing too. It was challenging returning to education, particularly understanding the food chemistry modules, but the support from the department enabled me to push myself and obtain a real array of knowledge and skills. By the final year, when we had a new product development project that helped tie it all together, it was fascinating to see all the elements come together that many don't think about. Including nutritional information, environmental impact, distribution, food safety, food quality, marketing and more!

What are the day-to-day routines in your job?

My job offers a real mix of responsibilities. I work for a contract caterer with contracts all over the UK (education and corporate), so some weeks I'm travelling around the UK delivering nutrition education talks/workshops in schools with different age groups. Other weeks I'll be creating content for new talks, as each school have different interests so it's important that I can offer a diverse range of talks relating to food and nutrition. I also audit menus to ensure that they are complying with brand and national school food standards. I am currently working on nutrition training for chefs and location managers to ensure they have the support they need to create nutritious menus for children and young adults.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about Food Science as a career?

Go for it! There are so many options for an exciting and diverse career. Be curious, chat to people in the industry, they love talking about what they do.

This material has been developed with industry involvement to support graduates, employers and degree educators.

<https://www.ifst.org/resources/competencies-food-graduate-careers>.