



Competencies for Food Graduate Careers

Graduate Scheme

Name: Alice Pontin
Degree Course: BSc (Hons) Food Science and Nutrition (with Industrial Placement).
Place Studied: University of Reading
Date Graduated: Summer 2019
First Graduate Job: Graduate Food Technologist, M&S



When did you first become interested in Food Science?

During my GCSEs I developed a strong interest for sciences and Nutrition. I thought the only available career to me was a Dietician so applied for some work experience at the Royal Berks Hospital. I quickly recognised that this was not the role for me, but during the placement I spent some time in the Hospital kitchen and realised food manufacturing was where my passion really sparked. I found it fascinating to see food production at large scale and the controls that were in place to allow the hospital to accommodate the various dietary requirements of their patients.

What was Uni Study Like?

I loved the variability and practicality of the course at Reading University. In a given week I would spend time in the pilot plant, microbiology or physiology labs, kitchens, lecture theatres and even food factories. I loved seeing the scientific theory being applied to real life examples and industry scenarios. My favourite assignment was my final year research project. I spent part of my industrial placement working for a seafood manufacturer where I developed a theory on the flavour chemistry of smoked salmon based on various parameters of the fish. The University allowed me to use this theory to build my research project and I was able to come to an outcome that had tangible benefit for the industry.

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

The interesting aspect of the job is that there is no 'day-to-day'! The job is so variable, no two days are the same. I spend my time working at my suppliers (in food factories, depots, farms, etc.), in our stores or distribution centres, or at head office where I might be in tasting rooms/kitchens or in meetings. As a Food Technologist I am responsible for the suppliers within M&S Confectionery where I manage quality, safety, integrity and legality for my range and contribute to new product development by bringing new kitchen concepts to factory scale.

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

If it's something they're passionate about, it can be the best career in the world. Opportunity for travel, scope for progression and a stretching career that is constantly changing. If you want a secure industry you can guarantee people will always need to eat!

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

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