

CASE

STUDY

Competencies for

Food Graduate Careers

PhD or other Postgraduate Research Role

Name: Tom Hunt

Degree Course studied: BSc (Hons) Food Science with Industrial Year

Place Studied: University of Nottingham

Date Graduated: July 2021

First Graduate Role: PhD student at University of East Anglia



When did you first become interested in Food Science?

So I would say it was about halfway through my sixth form, actually it was something I saw in a TV programme. Then I started to really research food sciences and do University visits before I applied on UCAS. I studied Biology Chemistry French at A-level.

What was Uni Study Like?

Moving from the level that you're taught in sixth form going up to the level at university was quite a big step, and again into second year. But I've actually done well, so it's just about meeting that challenge. The course in general were really social and we all got on because the cohort was quite a good size. My placement year (Symrise) was definitely a good way to see how all of the stuff I'd learned in first and second year actually applied to real life.

I really enjoyed sensory science and the new product development (NPD) module. Also a microbiology task where we were given food product that was contaminated and had to practically work back to find out the contamination source.

If you go into a supermarket to buy some food, it's there on the shelves. You don't think there's hundreds of hours of work behind this product getting onto the shelves and being safe and being acceptable quality and that was just something that was quite a surprise to find.

What are the day-to-day routines?

I'm looking at the microbiome of different genotypes and how that relates back to Alzheimer's disease, and nutrition.

So it can be anything from a full day in the lab extracting DNA or doing analysis of the metabolites or microbiome from the samples that I've currently got, or it could be fully desk based. I've quite enjoyed the challenge of getting my project up and running. After my PhD I think I may go back into the food industry.

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

Maybe taking a gap year and find yourself a food company that would take you in for a little bit to work in the business. I did a few months working as an intern in a cake manufacturer in NPD (new product development) and in technical. It will give you a taste and see what you're interested in. However, food sciences so broad and there are so many options afterwards.

This material has been developed with industry involvement to support graduates, employers and degree educators. <https://www.ifst.org/resources/competencies-food-graduate-careers>