



Geography Past Pupils' STEM Careers Profile Loreto Grammar School

Name: Niamh O'Neill



Dates you studied at Loreto Grammar School:

September 2007-June 2014

A' Level Subjects Studied:

Geography, English Literature and Religious Studies

Third Level Course/ Training Programme/ Qualification (with location) undertaken after leaving Loreto:

European Planning (MPlan) at Queen's University, Belfast

What attracted you to this course?

I was not sure what I wanted to do at university, but my favourite subject was Geography, so I chose this course as it contained modules which related to the Human aspect of geography and also presented the opportunity to go abroad for a year at another European university.

Company you currently work for, Job Title and Location:

I currently work in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council as a Planning Assistant, based in Enniskillen. I previously worked in Belfast City Council in a similar role.

How has Geography helped you in your career? (skills development, e.g. time management, problem-solving, leadership, team work, literacy, numeracy, self-discipline, perseverance, etc)

Studying geography provided me with essential skills which I employ every day in the workplace. Time management is crucial as a planner as you are working towards different target dates when determining applications. I have to schedule site days and have time to write up my reports to provide recommendations to my senior planner. Problem solving and decision making are at the centre of my job and these were skills which were developed through both GCSE but mainly A Level Geography whereby we were provided with the ability to do this effectively and efficiently.

Another important skill in my career is report writing; I must produce reports which can be viewed by the public and so this requires the need for them to be concise, logical and clear all of which are taught and developed through Geography. The ability to write well is incredibly important and is something which will serve you well not

only in your career but prior to this in University when writing essays; the importance of good grammar and punctuation, as boring as it sounds cannot be overlooked- it's usually worth 10% on its own.

Although it has been a few years since I studied geography, I always remember organisation and perseverance were always encouraged and these have been essential in the attitude I brought to my studies at university and beyond into my current career.

Has your study of Geography opened up new opportunities for you? (travel, working abroad, volunteering, leadership, etc)

Studying Geography and my enjoyment of the subject was what led my decision to choose my degree in Queens and this gave me the opportunity to go abroad in my Masters year through the Erasmus programme to Stockholm University. This was a fantastic opportunity to experience studying in another country for a year which allowed me to experience new cultures and meet a diverse range of people. Studying geography gave me the skills and confidence that I would be able to go abroad on my own and cope with the demands of study in a new country.

Why would you recommend A Level Geography to a young person today?

There are so many skills and qualities which you develop through studying geography which are not only essential in study and subsequently in your career but also in everyday life; critical thinking, communication, ICT, organisation and writing are all so important in todays work place and beyond and these are all developed through Geography.

Overall, it is a fun subject; it is interesting and engaging, meaning you will rarely dread going to class.

You will always learn something new and useful and the support you received from the Geography Department was always second to none!
