

## Nick Baker is a Diplomat for the Foreign Commonwealth Office

What A Level combination did you do?

Geography  
Biology  
French

Why did you choose Geography at University?

Because I enjoyed it at school and was reasonably good at it.

At which University did you read Geography?

University of Leeds (Geography and Spanish: 4 year course)

When?

1996-2000

Please give an outline of your employment history after graduating (most recent at the top):

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)- graduate fastrack scheme- Diplomat  
Marsans travel agency (Spain) - Marketing

What skills do you think you have developed through studying Geography?

The Geography department at Leeds was extremely focused on teaching skills, not just geographical knowledge. As such we learnt social research skills such as questionnaires and interviewing techniques, team-work exercises such as brainstorming, and presentation skills including the use of IT such as power point (which is now widely used in the work environment). In addition the Geography department at Leeds was pioneering a work placement scheme whilst I was there. This gave me the opportunity to carry out a web based marketing project for a travel company in Leeds and write a report and give a business presentation on my findings. This kind of work-based experience is invaluable in selling yourself to try and get on to the first rung of the career ladder.

Do you think Geography has helped you with past/current jobs? How?

Yes. It has helped loads with my current job with the FCO. International relations, politics, social research, history, trade and environmental issues are all elements covered by a geography degree and all are aspects in determining British Foreign Policy towards other countries.

What advice would you give a 6th former who is good at Geography and considering studying it at degree level?

The same advice as my geography teacher gave me! Choose whichever subject you most enjoy and that you are good at. Avoid choosing a degree subject based entirely on what you want to be afterwards, as that may change (a part from the obvious exceptions such as Medicine: and even then a friend I studied Geography with at Leeds is in his final year before qualifying as a junior doctor). I only considered applying to the FCO 2 years into my degree. I did not know when I chose to study Geography that it would put me on the path to becoming a diplomat. With a Geography Degree you keep your options open.

Are there any other ways you feel that geography and your career structure may be linked?

My interest in Geography is closely linked to my passion for travel, a fascination with the outside World and a strong desire to understand it. That's essentially what Geography is about, and it is also what being a Diplomat is about.

Do you feel that studying Geography has meant you could reach your career goals? Why/why not?

Yes. It opened my eyes to the huge range of opportunities that are out there and gave me the skills I needed to go after those opportunities. Outside my experience at the FCO I have also undertaken expeditions to

Kenya to build a school and the Indonesian rainforests to do conservation work, taught English in Ecuador and worked with street children in Bolivia. It was a Geographer's outlook that pushed me to do these things.

Education Department  
Careers poster  
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