

## What do maths students do after their course?



### Huw Day MSci Mathematics 2019

I'm doing a PhD in Random Matrix Theory with Genomics at Bristol, starting in September. After three to four years I'll have earned a doctorate and hopefully will have figured out where I want to go next!

I could barely make up my mind on modules each term, let alone about career prospects. Initially I was interested in a career in the military, and then looked at graduate roles, but the more I looked into it, the more I felt like I was just trying to shoehorn my skills into something I had only a passing interest in. I realised that if I never tried to do a PhD, I'd always wonder what it was like.

After a strong performance in my first-year exams, one of my tutors recommended that I apply for a university summer research placement. Professor Jon Keating agreed to work with me for eight weeks after my second year. He introduced me to lots of people (including my soon-to-be PhD supervisor) and gave me an idea of what research was like.

Professor Keating then offered to supervise my undergraduate project. This was the most difficult part of my degree and also the part I enjoyed the most; I was immensely proud of the piece of work I produced. It also helped me decide that while number theory was interesting, I wanted a change in pace.

At the start of third year when I was still evaluating my options, going to lots of careers fairs was useful. The fact that I was dragging my feet to them made me realise I might be looking in the wrong place. I went to a talk for potential PhD students and found talking to some actual PhD students to be really valuable.

The careers service here at Bristol is outstanding. I booked a free 15-minute consultation in my final year to give me an idea of some things I might not have considered. I'd recommend anyone do this.

## What career advice would you give to a student preparing to graduate?

You are not alone. If you went to university straight out of school, then you're making choices that could impact the rest of your life at age 21 or 22. That's daunting!

Getting rejections can be heart-breaking, so make use of whatever support structures you can; friends, family, tutors, student health services or whatever groups/societies you are part of.

Find out more at [bristol.ac.uk/maths/careers](http://bristol.ac.uk/maths/careers)

## What career advice would you give to a first or second-year student?

First year does count, just not in the way you think. Maths is very linear, so doing well lays a solid foundation for the years to come. The knowledge builds up on itself and it's easier to do well in later years. It is also useful to have strong marks when applying for internships or research placements in your second year.

I'd also recommend you make good impressions. People value someone who is hardworking, focussed and trustworthy - aim to be someone people can rely on. If you're late to lectures or don't turn up, seldom hand in homework and miss deadlines, are you really setting the best impression? Securing my PhD funding hinged on my reputation and strong references.