



Nick Cutler

PhD Geography, 2008

Who is your current employer and what do they do?

Jointly employed by Churchill College and Trinity College, Cambridge (constituent colleges of the University of Cambridge); I took up this position in September 2011.

What is your job title and what does the job entail?

Admissions Tutor at Churchill College

Director of Studies in Geography at Trinity College

As an admissions tutor, I am responsible for admitting undergraduates to Churchill College. I coordinate the assessment of applications in all subjects, liaise with the University on the exchange of admissions data, conduct interviews and provide feedback to applicants. I am also responsible for maintaining contacts with schools, alongside the College's Schools Liaison Officer. As a director of studies, I am responsible for the academic welfare of geography undergraduates at Trinity College. I produce an academic programme for first year students and oversee the academic progress of students in the first and second year through frequent meetings. I also conduct small group tutorials with undergraduate geographers from different colleges across the University. I am also expected to produce my own research, too!

How did you achieve your current position?

I applied for a number of post doctoral positions in the final year of my PhD, but without success. After my viva, I was fortunate to secure some short-term (weeks or months) appointments as a lab/research assistant within the School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh. It took me over a year to find a more stable position as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford. I applied for approximately 15 positions (mostly postdoctoral appointments) both in the UK and abroad during the intervening period. I had a number of near-misses before I finally secured the Oxford post doc: this was disappointing at the time, but it gave me invaluable experience of the process of applying for academic positions. It also made me think very hard about my future career (and research directions in particular). The postdoctoral position in Oxford allowed me develop my publication record, gave me experience of teaching undergraduates and exposed me to the undergraduate admissions system (I was involved in interviewing applicants to read geography), all of which proved valuable when I was applying for my current job.

How do you feel you have used the skills and/or knowledge developed during your research degree in your career to date?

I have stayed in an academic research environment since I graduated, so the skills that I picked up during my PhD have been critical to my career development. Along with basic research skills e.g. experimental design and data analysis, the most important skill I developed during my research degree was how to write research papers. Over the past few years, I have also refined my ability to write grant proposals via a series of small research grant applications (not all successful, of course). I did a great deal of undergraduate tuition during my PhD and this has also proved invaluable as my career has developed.