

Lani Watson

**Teaching Assistant, part-time (0.5FTE)
Philosophy Department**



A typical week

- Responsible for tutoring on two undergraduate modules (one per semester)
- Six hours delivering tutorials
- Tutorial preparation (including occasionally attending lectures)
- Office hours
- Responding to student queries via email
- Other administration tasks (including attendance registering and communicating with Teaching Office staff and other course staff)
- Marking essays and exams (only in relevant weeks)

My career journey

2011 – present	Teaching Assistant, Philosophy Dept., University of Edinburgh
2015 – present	Careers Service, University of Edinburgh
2011 – 2015	PPLS Career Development PhD, Philosophy Dept., University of Edinburgh
2009 – 2010	MSc by Research, Philosophy Dept., University of Edinburgh
2007 – 2010	Freelance Copywriter and website editor at responsibletravel.com
2004 – 2007	BA, Philosophy Dept., University of York
2003	BSc Biology and Geography within the Natural Sciences programme (First Class; University of Durham)

What has helped me progress

My progress through a BA, MSc, and PhD in philosophy is the most influential factor in helping me get to my current position as a Teaching Assistant at the University. Without these qualifications I would not be sufficiently informed about the subject areas I am teaching to take up the role. More specifically, my funding as a PhD researcher committed me to a certain amount of teaching during the course of my doctoral research which prepared me well for my current role providing all the relevant experience, both of the specific courses I am now tutoring on and of tutoring practice in general. Without this experience I think it would have been hard to be hired for a teaching position immediately following my PhD.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Careers Service



Supportive people

I have had good support from all three of my PhD supervisors, as well as other members of the academic community who have offered valuable advice about which jobs and/or funding to apply for, journals to publish in, and research directions worth pursuing. This has often come about as a result of me proactively seeking advice and I have found academics generally very generous with their time and support. The Philosophy Department also ran a series of 'placement seminars' while I was a PhD student which were very useful for getting an understanding of diverse aspects of pursuing an academic career. I have also received invaluable advice from the Careers Service at the University concerning my CV and interview technique.

Personal qualities needed for success

- Passion for one's research and discipline
 - Confidence in one's abilities
 - Open-minded and inquisitive approach to intellectual pursuits
 - Ability to articulate ideas and defend their worth
 - Ability and willingness to manage a diverse and often heavy workload
 - Resilience.
-

The rewards

Helping students to enjoy philosophy and become more confident doing it.

The challenges

- Underemployment
 - Long-term insecurity
 - Significant conflicting demands on time including managing other paid employment, applying for jobs/grants, and engaging in other CV boosting activities.
-

Taking the next steps

Continuing to build a research profile through publications and presentations as well as academic networks, developing clear and focused lines of research and communicating these across multiple platforms including maintaining a professional website, and a large amount of luck.

How supervisors can support PhD students

- Encouraging PhD students to take advantage of all the opportunities available including via the Careers Service.
- Building confidence in their research and other academic skills.
- Becoming informed about the wide range of opportunities open to PhD students both within and outside of academia, in an increasingly diverse and competitive marketplace.

