



## Case study

### **Mathematicians**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Sue</b>
<b>University:</b>	<b>University of Durham</b>
<b>Course:</b>	<b>MMATH</b>
<b>Age:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Current Job Title:</b>	<b>Mathematician</b>



it's an **interesting** world

### **How did you get your current job – what were the steps you took whilst studying?**

“I became aware of GCHQ from a friend of mine who had seen a GCHQ advertisement for ‘mathematicians’ on a maths related website. I had been planning to do a PhD but (after looking at the GCHQ careers website for further information about the role) was really fascinated by the possibility of applying my maths to such an interesting field, so decided to apply at the end of my degree.”

### **Why did you decide to join GCHQ?**

“It might sound a bit ‘geeky’ but I really liked the maths tests that formed part of the selection criteria. I’ve always enjoyed problem solving and the tests played to this strength. Although, I have to admit that there were several questions where I had no idea what was being asked of me! However, it was explained to me that this was to be expected and it was more important to fully attempt the questions I felt comfortable tackling.”

### **How relevant was your subject of study in securing your current job?**

“Very – you really need to have had a significant maths element to your course to be considered. You simply will not get through the tests initially. For the later assessment stages they are really interested in broader skills (such as teamworking and communication ability), which initially took me by surprise, but when I started thinking about what I had actually been doing throughout my studies I could see the crossover.”

### **What skills are necessary to perform well in the role?**

“It’s really important that you can analyse and interpret data (from a range of sources – technical and non-technical). Also – and this probably goes without saying – but you need to be able to apply a methodical approach to the way you work. A problem solving nature and the ability to spot patterns is equally important.”

### **What’s the training like?**

“The maths training is quite comprehensive, good fun and quite surprising in places. It’s amazing how a basic grasp of arithmetic has so many practical applications protecting our national security.”

### **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

“Being able to spend time thinking about interesting problems and coming up with innovative solutions. Plus, I work alongside some of the brightest and most interesting people who all share a passion for mathematics, so the opportunities to learn from ‘some of the best’ are unrivalled.”

### **Finally, what advice do you have for other students and graduates who would like to get into this career?**

“The maths test paper is designed to be tough but typically a couple of good answers are likely to be enough to get you an invitation to interview – so don’t do what people often do, and walk out after the first test!”