



In the first six months of 2010, losses from online card fraud and banking in the UK were in excess of £186m.

These are big numbers to influence.

Case study

Information Assurance (Microelectronics)

Name: Nia

Age: 23

University: Durham

Course: Masters in Physics MPhys

Current Job Title: Information Assurance Technical Expert – Microelectronics Researcher



it's an **interesting** world

How did you get your current job – what were the steps you took whilst studying/from graduation?

“The Institute of Physics publish a handbook containing companies who employ Physicists, GCHQ was one of those. I had limited knowledge on what GCHQ did, but after doing some research I decided to apply; the thought of working in British Intelligence whilst staying within Physics appealed to me.”

What does your job actually involve?

“I am a physics researcher in the microelectronics team. I am currently working on a variety of projects which vary from computer simulations, practical experimentation, problem solving and consultancy. I look into the physics concerning semiconductors, hardware and electronics.”

What are your colleagues like?

“Everyone in my team has been very welcoming since day one. I came straight from university to work at CESG – the Information Assurance arm of GCHQ – and therefore it was all very daunting. However, the team made me feel at home straight away. We have lunch together almost every day and have regular social events. The sheer volume of knowledge and expertise within the team is impressive and I have found if I need help with something someone in the team will have an answer or be able to point me in the right direction.”

How difficult was it relocating to Cheltenham?

“I started with 16 other people and we have all kept in touch. We often meet up for coffee in work, go to the cinema and go out for drinks in Cheltenham. It means that I have an extended group of friends outside my team which made relocating to Cheltenham easier.”

What are the best things about working in this sector?

“My favourite things about the job are the cutting edge research; the many opportunities to go on courses to expand my knowledge; the friendliness of the department.

The work can be challenging but it is incredibly interesting. It is great to know that not only is my work contributing to national security but it is also on the cutting edge of science.

In the six months that I have been here I have attended many internal and external courses, which have been very interesting. The department really recognises the importance of training their staff.

Everyone has been so kind and willing to help since I started and the social side has been great. I moved to Cheltenham without knowing anybody but the dynamics of GCHQ meant that I quickly made a very close group of friends.”

Finally, what advice would you have for other people who would like to get into this sort of career?

“I would recommend getting some work experience. I did an internship in the summer of my penultimate year and it gave me a prior understanding of how a business works whilst also giving me a lot of evidence of my abilities/competencies (outside of university) for interviews.”