

# Graduate Trainee Scheme

# Case Study



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

## Nicole Watson

### What attracted you to a career in Higher Education Management?

“I wanted to get into management because of my previous experience of project work during my degrees also I liked the idea of being able to apply my knowledge across different departments throughout the University. Adding to this, the University is so diverse and constantly evolving which really emphasised how exciting this opportunity could be.”

### What parts of the programme have you enjoyed the most and why?

“I like the fact that you get the opportunity to undertake 4 different placements for a 6 month period during the two year scheme, this gives you enough time to learn, develop skills and move on. The rotation of departments has given me a broader experience. The ILM programme has provided me with something to work towards and focus on; it has also enabled me to network with current managers and learn from their experience as well as giving me a recognised qualification in management.”

### What have been the benefits of working in different departments across the University?

“The rotation of departments has given me real responsibility. The huge variety of tasks I have worked on has rewarded me with an agile way of working that is difficult to learn from a book. Whether it’s creating multi-audience digital content for the Institute of Integrative Biology or adapting the planning and recruiting practise of Widening Participation, I have to digest information rapidly, make a decision and see it followed through.”

### Which parts of the programme have you found most challenging?

“Initially I found the Institute of Learning and Management Level 5 qualification challenging as I have never worked in Higher Education before. The course can be demanding in terms of assignments at times, you really have to apply yourself to achieve the best results. In addition to this, I found it challenging when finishing on a Friday in one department to then start again on Monday in a new department, but you soon get used to it. ”



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“I was drawn to working at the University because I liked Liverpool as a city having been a student here. I studied Geography for 3 years and then went on to do my Masters in Civic Design. Project management work was a core component of my degrees. I really enjoyed this aspect of being able to work on a variety of projects as it enabled me to interact and engage with an array of people.”

### **Tell us about the training and support you have received?**

“I have a Mentor who I go to for 1-1 support but alongside this my placements have also been really encouraging. For example IIB signed me up to attend a Writing for the Web training course while I was on placement with the Digital Communications team. In November I will be participating on the Stepping into Management course, which is run by the University’s Organisational and Development team.”

### **Would you say you have changed since you started the programme? And if so in what way?**

“Yes I would say I have become more confident in my ability, such as my capability to self – manage. I have also learnt to have a more positive approach to my work, for example, I feared data throughout my degrees; however, I now have undertaken data analysis through my placements with Strategic Planning and Widening Participation – I realise that just because I may not be comfortable in doing a certain task, it does not mean that I cannot do it. The Graduate Scheme has also enhanced my people management skills”.

### **How useful have you found it having a University Mentor?**

“I have found having someone at a high level who has a strategic overview very useful. This has been crucial to my career development - providing informative and constructive advice which always points me towards things I might not of thought about.”

### **What could the University do to make the experience even more positive?**

“If Lewis (other Graduate Trainee) was not completing the scheme with me then this experience could at times have been daunting as often I am the youngest and newest members of my placement teams. I believe it would be a great opportunity if at the 3 month progress meetings with HR, myself and Lewis had the chance to meet in order to share our experiences.”

### **What advice would you give to other graduates who might be considering the graduate trainee programme at the University of Liverpool?**

“It is great work experience, an opportunity for skills development and career progression. Don’t just see it as 2 isolated years, see it as career development where you are involved in high level projects and can focus on your personal development. Even if you get to the assessment day that is a fantastic experience in itself.”

### **What are your ambitions and hopes for the future?**

“Ideally I would like to do project management in a job that’s versatile and has multiple high level projects, as I have realised routine is not necessarily for me. I am really enjoying my current placement with the Widening Participation Team and feel it is very suited to me. If I don’t end up working in HE then I would maybe look for a job in Transport Planning, as I am keen to really establish a career not just a series of jobs.”



**“The placements have also been a great networking opportunity as it has enabled me to meet people from all different levels across the university.”**