

Mhairi Gowans**MA History and Art History / 2008****Online Engagement Officer - Alumni and Fundraising team at the London School of Economics****Please can you describe your role?**

I manage social and digital content and channels. This involves writing content, creating videos, photography, image editing, understanding user journeys and utilising data to inform strategy.

What experiences do you think have proved beneficial to your career journey?

Going into employment straight out of university instead of doing a Masters. I did eventually do a Masters but only once I had 3 years work experience. Key to my experience though is to not accept the devaluing of skills by doing work for free that you should be paid for, and getting transferable skills so you can move sectors and jobs if you need to. I was able to use marketing experience I had gained working in museum education to move into digital communications. This led to improved pay, job security and career progression.

What impact did the 2008 financial crash have on your career path?

I started looking at options at the beginning of my fourth year. I was worried because my brother had graduated 2 years earlier and had struggled to find graduate work. The History of Art department sent round an advert for a teaching in Japan opportunity. By graduation in July I already had a job sorted. I lived in Japan for 3 years and was able to save up enough money for my second degree. To some extent, that meant I felt initially relatively unscathed by the economic situation, however, coming back into the UK the impact of the financial crash and austerity measures meant that going into the sector I did (museums and heritage) was in hindsight a mistake. I ultimately had to recognise the situation was untenable and move into a different career. However, I now find myself doing work I actually think I am better suited for and I enjoy immensely - and which didn't really exist when I graduated!

What advice would you give to students thinking about employment in your field?

Think about what you want from a job in terms of the hours, the vibe, the values. Doing digital comms/marketing for a university is very different to doing it for an agency or a newspaper or TV channel. Do get some experience - while studying you could maybe volunteer for a small charity or organisation that needs help with their website/comms - but also know where to draw the line regarding doing work for free. When not studying you can try getting temp experience. If you can afford some basic tools, learn how to make films on your phone or how to use Adobe Creative suite. Writing/editing experience may be also useful so doing things like working on the university newspaper etc is useful experience.