

Industrial Placement with the Environment Agency

Rachel's story

Hi I'm Rachel, and I work as a Training and Skills Officer in the Environment Agency as part of my industry placement role. I am studying towards a degree in Politics and International Relations, though I have a keen interest in the environment in particular. **I have always been passionate about working in a place that prioritises our planet** and have volunteered in the past for my local environment group.

My degree and volunteering opened me up to the world of environmental justice and the troubling issue of the scarcity of water, prompting me to apply to a job related to this. A role at the Environment Agency in **Water Resources** – a specialist area of work managing how water is used – seemed the right fit for my placement year after finishing my second year at university.



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I joined my team at the end of July and have felt welcome since my first day. Although I was nervous to start a new job in a work environment unfamiliar to me, the sense of community I felt within my team and in my office is unmatched. The support of my line manager, office buddy and mentor have made a huge difference and allowed me to settle in well.



The role has been a perfect mix of developing my knowledge of the public sector and pressures of water resources whilst being given opportunities to try things I never imagined I would be doing, such as working on marketing materials, travelling to Oxfordshire to film promotional videos, and hosting information sessions to hundreds of people!

I really like the quiet researching parts of my job so delivering presentations to so many people is something I never would have dreamed I could do before this job – it is now something I enjoy. **My colleagues trusting me to have this responsibility has immensely helped my self-confidence.** I have also had the chance to meet lots of people in various areas of the Environment Agency to learn about their roles and even hear about the policy side of our work which is outside of my typical day job. Recently, I was able to attend the Defra Live conference to find out more about environmental principles when making policy which really appealed to my political interests.

The Environment Agency allows for two environmental outcome days in your time here, my first one has been a highlight of my time so far. I learned how to use a scythe to cut down vegetation to maintain the Foss riverbank – this is really important to ensure high levels of biodiversity in the area. My second environmental day is something I get to plan myself for my team which I look forward to in the new year.

My biggest project is a learning month I will deliver in April where I plan information and training sessions, create presentations, recruit speakers, and promote a number of talks for staff development. Topics range from GIS mapping, to charring meetings, to information on working with water companies. By this time, I will be working an incident role too.

“**My time has been an incredibly enriching and enjoyable experience**”

The incident roles are part of the Environment Agency’s emergency response to environmental incidents including flooding, pollution and more.

The knowledge, contacts and development of personal skills I have acquired here will be something I take with me back to university and continue to make use of in later life. My time at the Environment Agency has been an incredibly enriching and enjoyable experience so far – this is a workplace I hope to return to in the future.



Written by Rachel, Industry Placement Student at the Environment Agency