

Charlotte Davenport

BTEC Level 3 in Environmental Sustainability



“My BTEC helped me grow and find a path to my dream career in environmental sustainability.”

Charlotte Davenport is originally from Kent and currently works for NHS Digital as a Sustainability Officer. In 2012, she took a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Environmental Sustainability at Canterbury College, finishing in 2014 before going to University. Charlotte got a triple distinction star in her BTEC and chose to go on and study a BSc in Sustainability and Environmental Management at the University of Leeds.

Outside of work, Charlotte is a keen gardener and proud allotment owner and has a growth mindset in more ways than one! We spoke to her in February 2021 about her current role and how BTEC helped her grow and flourish in her career in the sustainability sector.

Why did you choose to do a BTEC?

I've known I wanted to be in the environmental sustainability sector from the age of 16 and I found the range of modules my BTEC offered extremely valuable. I was able to take vocational modules as well as modules related to the job I was hoping to go into - habitat surveys and plant and soil science, research-focused modules on sustainable development and sustainable business, as well as modules on the urban environment. My BTEC offered a huge variety of in-depth modules spread across two years.

Did you go on to higher education after your BTEC?

I wanted to go to university and if I'm honest, I was worried about how universities would respond to me with a Level 3 BTEC qualification as I had heard from school friends that it was not common for people to go to university with BTEC. However, I'm happy to bust that myth! My BTEC was accepted at several universities including Leeds which was the Russell Group institution that I attended, as well as securing me an unconditional offer from the University of East Anglia.

Can you tell us a bit about your current role?

I work for NHS Digital as a Sustainability Officer. My day-to-day is varied, I undertake a broad range of tasks from delivering staff training on sustainability, hosting internal sustainability engagement events, improving our organisations environmental credentials, and supporting the resilience and risk agenda.

I also submit quarterly reports for the Greening Government Commitment and contribute to our sustainability annual reporting which involves a lot of data gathering and interpretation. NHS Digital is a unique place in terms of sustainability, there are massive environmental and social benefits to be had from digitising the health sector, but the environmental and social impacts of these interventions must be managed. The ICT industry is hugely resource intensive. I work with a broad range of stakeholders internally and have worked across government on the Net Zero agenda.

How did your BTEC help you in your current role?

The energy management module was particularly useful, I do a lot of data analysis of our energy usage in my current role so the skills I picked up on the BTEC course helped me apply my learnings in my day job.

More generally I was able to spend a lot more time on my passions and as part of the coursework assessments I could research a whole host of areas. My tutors were brilliant, we had three subject matter experts teach us over the course and they helped guide us academically and in our chosen careers. Thank you to Rob, Lorna and Steve at Canterbury College!

Would you recommend BTEC?

I definitely would recommend BTEC especially to students who know what they would like to specialise in and can use the two-year BTEC programme to further advance their skillsets in that specific area. I think that BTECs are also an incredibly valuable qualification as it shows potential employers that you have committed wholly to one subject and have more advanced knowledge and experience compared to other students who may not have specialised as early.

My careers advice for students starting out in sustainability would be to attend as many careers events as possible, get to know your local employers. Quite often you can find employers who offer short internships, these are great opportunities to apply your learning from your BTEC in the world of work.

What's next for you?

I really enjoy working in the health service, the workload is incredibly diverse and the challenges that climate change will bring to the health service need to be appropriately managed. I'm proud to be playing my part in the NHS and aspire to continue working in the health service for many more years. In the next 6 months, I hope to achieve Practitioner membership at the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and continue furthering my career in the health service.

Many thanks to Charlotte for her time speaking to us about BTEC.

This interview took place in March 2021.

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