



Diplomatic & Development Economics



Jack Withers

What led you to apply for the Civil Service Fast Stream programme?

I started a Summer Internship at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. I really enjoyed the Civil Service culture and the feeling that I was working on something that really mattered and impacted so many lives, so I decided to follow up the internship by applying to the Fast Stream.

Tell us a bit about yourself. What is your degree and how do you feel you can use it in the Civil Service?

I graduated in 2020, having done History and Politics at Oxford. Learning about the historical context for today's international system has been very useful in my work, given that even if we as diplomats don't always remember past events, our interlocutors very often do. It's therefore very useful to have a good grounding in how events have led us to where we are, not least because it also provides hints on how to handle future incidents.

How have the projects you have worked on helped deliver better services for the people of the UK? What was your contribution?

All the work of the FCDO is designed to protect the interests of the people of the UK by shaping an open and stable international order, protecting our national and international security and supporting British nationals around the world. Part of this means responding to emerging crises, and I've been lucky to have helped in this by working on the UK's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the Sudan and Niger crises.

Which locations and departments have you been posted to during the Civil Service Fast Stream so far?

As a Diplomatic and Development Fast Streamer, my entire time has been spent in the FCDO in Whitehall. It has given me a foot in the door which will allow me to take up roles in our embassies around the world in the future. Who knows what the future holds!

How have the skills and knowledge you have acquired through the Fast Stream training helped you?

Working on a country desk as well as undertaking a stint in private office has given me a good understanding of the variety of pressures and inputs that go into formulating foreign policy. I'm looking forward to starting a post where I can bring my insight into how the Special Advisers' and Foreign Secretary's offices work when writing effective policy recommendations.

Describe any barriers you faced throughout the application process. How did you overcome them?

I always found the situational judgement test very tricky and was never able to get the hang of it. Taking part in the Summer Internship Programme gave me access to lots of helpful training and mock interviews, and also meant we were able to skip the situational judgement part of the process. I would recommend the programme to anyone from a disadvantaged background who is interested in joining the Fast Stream.