

Faculty of Education student captains University Challenge team:

Interview with Bobby Seagull

You might recognise Bobby Seagull from his successful appearances captaining Emmanuel College, Cambridge on University Challenge recently. He won audiences over with his vast knowledge, his sense of humour, and perhaps most importantly... his extremely memorable name!

Bobby completed a PGCE in Secondary Mathematics at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, between 2014 and 2015. Since then, he has taken up a teaching post in London and has chosen to study this year for a part-time Masters in Education (MEd) at the Faculty of Education, alongside his teaching.

Here, our Schools Liaison Coordinator, Eve, speaks to Bobby about his experiences as a teacher and about why he chose to train with the University of Cambridge.



Eve: Why did you decide to train to become a teacher?

Bobby: I previously had careers in finance (as a trader in investment banking and a chartered accountant as well). I have always shown an interest in education as I have been running my own educational social enterprise that supports sixth form students applying to top universities. So education has always had a close place to my heart.

I believe that education is the single biggest driver of social change and opportunity for societies to advance, and as such, I wanted to play a small role in this field. I want to help inspire the future society of tomorrow.

Eve: Why did you choose to follow the PGCE route rather than one of the other routes available?

Bobby: The PGCE route blends education theory with practical classroom experience. Further, it develops your classroom experience in a managed way so that you are ready in your own time to take the full reins of a classroom teacher.

Eve: Why did you choose to do your PGCE at Cambridge?

Bobby: Quite simply, Cambridge has the reputation for the best PGCE in the UK. Further, the Faculty of Education also has a pre-eminent position within UK education and I felt that this Faculty within this University would give me a firm grounding for a career in the field.

I interviewed for several PGCEs but my Cambridge assessment centre experience stood out. The type of candidates I met and the course tutors confirmed for me that this was the place I needed to be.

Eve: How did you find the course?

Bobby: I absolutely loved the PGCE course. It had the right blend of university-based Faculty theory and the practical side of being in the school.

The PGCE entitled me to mentor support from my course tutor and my school mentor. This provided the right mix of someone who understood the academic demands of my PGCE and someone who knew the practical rigours of teaching at my placement schools.

I enjoyed being the Secondary PGCE course representative on the Faculty of Education board. This allowed me to see the wider perspective on how the PGCE fitted in with the Faculty's wider remit of education. I also took full advantage of Cambridge life – competing as an amateur for the University middle distance running team in the Varsity race against Oxford, attending society talks delivered by Nobel Laureates, donning black tie for several May balls and my personal highlight was captaining Emmanuel College on University Challenge!

Eve: Why did you choose to apply to complete a Masters in Education, and why did you choose to do this at Cambridge?

Bobby: I enjoyed the process of conducting my research projects during my PGCE. I wanted to experience more of this and hence I applied to do my Masters in Education, specialising my research in the field of Mathematics teaching. It made logical sense for me to complete the Masters at Cambridge because I already had a sense of familiarity and affinity with the Faculty of Education.

The MEd has allowed me take a step back from the planning and execution of day-to-day teaching. I hope that this reflective approach will serve me well as I progress in my teaching career.

Eve: What are your hopes for the future?

Bobby: I want to make an impact on society and I believe that my skills and motivation are best suited in the long term to working with young people in education. I also want to help improve the perception of Mathematics among the public and also increase basic mathematical skills in the population. Both these ambitions are most suited if I stay in teaching and perhaps one day am head teacher of a secondary school!

Eve: What would you say to someone thinking of applying to teacher training, but who was undecided?

Bobby: I say you've got nothing to lose. Whilst it is definitely not a career for the faint-hearted, there are very few careers out there that offer you immediate responsibility on the front line. You can see the impact you are making on a day-to-day basis.

I would advise prospective teachers to spend some time observing lessons in schools so they get a flavour of how the daily routines of a teacher work. Even if it doesn't work out, teaching equips with many skills that can be used in other areas.