

Alumni – Sean Mulhern

When I was at Castle in the late 1990s, studying English, French and Economics, I was quietly convinced that a career in politics lay ahead of me: I'd get my degree, then quietly start in local issues, gaining some experience, before bursting onto the national scene and returning principled politics to Westminster. Given the current state of British politics, I'd say it's probably for the best that that didn't pan out for me.

I applied to study French and Politics at several different universities, but missed my required grades for most of them as I did not work as hard as I should, rather than take the places offered through clearing I decided to reapply after a year out. I worked in a hotel in Val d'Isère (exciting) and Tesco (less exciting), I received a place to study French and Russian at the University of Sheffield.

After my first year I dropped French and opting to specialise in Russian. That decision, more than any other, changed the course of my life for the next five years. I stayed at Sheffield, spent the winter of my year abroad living in the far North of Russia, where -20°C temperatures were nothing out of the ordinary and my summer living in St Petersburg. It was in this challenging, unpredictable, terrifying and often hilarious environment where I developed the most as a person during my time as a student. Putting yourself outside of your comfort zone forces you to adapt and make the most of your situation, however grim it may be.

With the spectre of graduation looming, I felt the call of the Russian-speaking world drawing me back and somewhat absent-mindedly applied for a job at a British school in Tashkent. It turned out that by the time I applied for Tashkent, all of the positions had been filled, but fortunately my CV was handed to their sister school in Moscow.

I'm writing this nearly three years later, having worked at the International School of Moscow since my graduation, in a new role every year, expanding both my skill set and my experience. I came to Moscow as an Assistant Teacher, before becoming an AT Co-ordinator and teacher of English as an Additional Language, but now work as the school's Exams Officer on a part-time basis, whilst editing articles for an English-language Russian news site (getrussia.com) in my spare time.

If you had have suggested to me when I was applying to UCAS that I'd be living in Moscow in ten years' time, I'd not have believed you. That wasn't part of the plan. But it seems that while plans work for some people, there is also a lot to be said for grabbing hold of the opportunities that life throws at you with a positive attitude until you find something that makes you happy.

