



Name: Shane Farrelly

Position: Trainee Actuary, Pricing (General Insurance)

Studied: Mathematics, NUIM

Now working for: RSA, Dublin

Why did you decide to pursue the actuarial route?

As much as it pains me to say it I've always loved maths and problem solving. The only issue I ever had was figuring out how to turn that into a useful skill that someone might want to pay me for! Having grown up listening to my Dad droning on about hedge funds, currency swaps and the "Footsie" 100 (try explaining that to a 5 year old!) I also always had a pretty keen interest in finance. So, when it came time to pick a career, an actuarial role seemed like a good fit.

What is the best thing about being an actuarial student?

I can't really comment on whether or not this is the experience of actuarial students in general but the role I'm in has, more or less from day one, given me the opportunity to interact with individuals right across the business in a broad range of functions, both internal and external to RSA and often with a lot of autonomy. Given that I had no real experience coming into the job I think this shows the trust given to, and high expectations placed upon, actuarial students. It's exactly the kind of environment I'd want to work in if given the choice and probably the best way to learn and develop as a professional.

Also, the graphs. I love all the graphs!

What is the worst thing about being an actuarial student?

The exams, enough said...

Something unexpected about your work

I suppose this kind of ties in with what I said above about interacting with people outside of actuarial roles. Any preconceived notions I had about actuaries as being purely technical people, hidden away in the basement with our calculators and spreadsheets have definitely been challenged since I began working. Some of the actuaries I've been lucky enough to work with are among the most visible and influential people in the business. There are definitely great opportunities to work your way into a position where you have a real influence on key decision-making and how a company operates, if it's something that interests you.

Any advice to students considering a career as an actuary

The usual clichéd advice about career choice obviously applies; do your own research on the career, talk to an actuary, make sure your skills match the requirements of the job etc. More specifically though, for school leavers thinking about it I'd say try to make the decision on whether or not you want to do it as early as possible and don't hedge your bets. The difference between entering into it with an actuarial degree under your belt as opposed to having no exemptions and all of the exams ahead of you (as in my case!) is massive. At the same time, if you've done or are currently doing a non-actuarial degree course and think it's the right career for you then don't let the exams daunt you, they're the one downside to what can be a hugely satisfying job!